



2.5.2023

## MISSION REPORT

following the ad hoc mission to Banjul, The Gambia, and Dakar, Senegal, from  
4 to 6 April 2023

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Members of the mission:

David McAllister	(AFET Chair, EPP) (Leader of the mission)
Željana Zovko	(AFET Vice-Chair, EPP)
Sven Simon	(EPP)
Tonino Picula	(S&D)
Javier Nart	(Renew)
Jean-Lin Lacapelle	(ID)

## ***Introduction***

This was the first ad hoc delegation of the AFET Committee to West Africa during the ninth legislative term. AFET decided to visit the region given its important role from a strategic and security point of view. Instability and conflict in this region implies not only a tremendous suffering of African people and a threat to stable democracies, but it can also have a direct impact on the security of Europe and its citizens.

The purpose of the visit was to reaffirm the EU's interest in strengthening its partnerships with The Gambia and Senegal at time of geopolitical shifts and challenges. The EU has supported The Gambia in its democratic transformation since 2017 and continues to do so in its democratic consolidation process. The EU-Senegal partnership has been stable for over 50 years, and comprises a structured political dialogue, strong trade relations, a fisheries agreement, and technical and financial cooperation in support of the country's population.

During the visit to Banjul on 4 and 5 April, the AFET delegation met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, the National Security Adviser, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, leaders and members of the political majority and opposition, the Chair of the National Human Rights Commission, as well as UN officials, civil society representatives, and chargés d'affaires of EU Member States represented in Banjul. MEPs also visited an EU-funded project that offers training and basic occupational education to women, focusing on solar energy and community development.

In Dakar, on 6 April, the AFET delegation met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President of the National Assembly, Chair of the National Assembly's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chair of the National Assembly's Committee on Development, Members of the National Assembly, as well as civil society representatives, and Heads of EU Member States missions.

## ***Summary account of meetings***

### ***The Gambia***

In meetings with governmental and parliamentary counterparts MEPs underlined the EU's 'first hour' support to The Gambia since the start of its democratic transition in 2017, and reaffirmed the partnership between The Gambia and the EU, and the EU's support to the country's ongoing democratic consolidation. MEPs encouraged The Gambia's authorities to progress on the next important milestones in this process.

MEPs underlined pending constitutional reform as a needed step towards completing the democratisation process and urged for political commitment and an inclusive consultation process. The Gambian interlocutors acknowledged the previously unsuccessful reform attempt. Both sides of The Gambia's political spectrum concurred on the need for broad dialogue to bring the process to fruition, welcomed EU support, and called for further assistance in the constitutional drafting process and capacity building.

In discussions with The Gambian National Assembly, MEPs also expressed concerns over a very low representation of women in public and political life. The Gambian counterparts recognised this inequality, while also noting cultural specificities.

On security sector reform (SSR), MEPs noted the extension of ECOMIG's mandate until the end of the year and underlined that recent threats to stability underscore the urgency of advancing on this process. Donor coordination to SSR, lack of functional training facilities, lack of understanding and support among citizens, and low personnel and material resources were among the challenges to security outlined by The Gambian interlocutors. The Gambian interlocutors were appreciative of the EU's support to the SSR process, including to the ECOMIG forces, and called for further focus on capacity building, devising and implementing the needed roadmaps and reforms.

On transitional justice, MEPs underscored the need for sustainable reconciliation. The Gambian counterparts informed MEPs of the country's plans to establish a hybrid court together with ECOWAS, established domestically but with international jurisdiction, as well as Special Prosecutor's Office. On human rights more generally, the need for better protection of the rights of all citizens, together with the need to involve civil society in decision-making processes discussed.

As regards Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, MEPs welcomed The Gambia's like-minded stance in expressing support to Ukraine, including on the level of the United Nations. The Gambia underscored the country's strong support for upholding an international rules-based order. The Gambia's interest of maintaining a prominent position on the international scene as regards the promotion of human rights was highlighted as a motivating factor in its decision to pursue a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice. On regional dynamics, MEPs inquired about threats posed by instability in West African, as well as on Senegal-The Gambia relations. MEPs also raised questions about security in the country and threats posed by radical Islam. The Gambian counterparts underlined the need for international partners to better take into account local and regional needs.

The Gambia regretted that it continues to be subject to visa restrictive measures by the EU. MEPs acknowledged the progress The Gambia has made in regards to cooperation on returns and readmission and hoped for a resolution of this issue soon.

### *Senegal*

MEPs underlined Senegal's standing as a symbol of democracy and stability, being one of the only countries in Africa to never experience a coup d'état. MEPs underscored that Senegal is a key partner in the region, and expressed hope for an easing of tensions in the country in the run up to Presidential elections next year. Senegalese counterparts reiterated the shared values of rule of law and democracy that underpin the Senegal-EU partnership, appreciating the EU's support.

MEPs recognised the achievements of Senegal's Chairmanship of the African Union in 2022, its active contribution to MINUSMA and its important role in ECOWAS. On regional dynamics, MEPs expressed concerns about possible spillover effects from neighbouring Mali. Senegal and the EU's interests converge on the need to prevent any possible spillover and to work towards stability in the region. MEPs also underscored that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes an attack on democratic values, the international rules-based order and principles of the UN Charter. MEPs emphasised Senegal as an important partner in upholding multilateralism and a rules-based order and asked the country for support in this

regard. Senegalese counterparts underlined the importance of understanding local and regional contexts and underlined threats to Senegal in the form of instability in the region and dangers posed by extremist terrorism, as well as pronounced disinformation campaigns.

On parliamentary cooperation, MEPs underlined its importance in the broader Senegal-EU partnership, proposing enhanced cooperation, including through democracy support activities, for the consideration of the National Assembly. The Senegalese National Assembly positively noted the Senegal-EU partnership, highlighting the fruitful relationship, and welcoming the outcomes of the February 2022 EU-AU Summit. Senegalese counterparts however noted the need for an urgent solution to putting in place a new partnership agreement between the EU and ACP countries, and underlined that supporting youth in the country and tackling issues related to illegal migration are important matters. Discussions with counterparts also focused on a cultural approach to ensuring stability in the region.

In discussions with civil society, interlocutors emphasised the need for stability and respect for democratic procedures ahead of upcoming Presidential elections in 2024.

### *Conclusions and follow-up*

The ad hoc delegation was of great value for the AFET Committee's work on the region and with The Gambia and Senegal. The high-level nature of the meetings provided an excellent opportunity to discuss ways to improve and develop the cooperation with both partner countries, especially on global issues of mutual interest and regional stability and security matters, but also on economic cooperation and human rights.

For The Gambia in particular, the visit allowed strengthening the partnership in the context of the democratic consolidation of the country. As regards Senegal, the visit presented an opportunity to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the long-standing Senegal-EU partnership.

The visit provides a sound basis for future exchanges of views with representatives of The Gambia and Senegal in the AFET Committee. The AFET delegation received press coverage by outlets in both countries.

*Annex: final programme*

**Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Mission to Banjul, The Gambia, and Dakar, Senegal**

**3-7 April 2023**

**Final Programme**

**Monday 3 April 2023 - Banjul (The Gambia)**

*Individual arrivals at Banjul International Airport*

**Tuesday 4 April 2023 - Banjul (The Gambia)**

08:30 - 09:30	Briefing by H.E. Ambassador Corrado Pampaloni, Ambassador of the European Union to The Gambia, with the participation of EU Member States chargés d'affaires
10:00 - 10:30	Meeting with Mr Fabakary Jatta, Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia
10:45 - 11:15	Meeting with Mr Seedy Njeh, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia
11:30 - 12:15	Meeting with Majority political groups of the National Assembly of The Gambia
12:30 - 13:15	Meeting with Mr Alhagie S Darboe, opposition political group leader, and opposition political groups of the National Assembly of The Gambia
13:45 - 15:00	Working lunch with the EU Delegation, GiZ and French development agency on the EU's cooperation activities in The Gambia
15:30- 16:30	Meeting with H.E. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia
16:45- 17:45	Meeting with H.E. Dawda Jallow, Minister of Justice of The Gambia
19:00 - 21:00	Working dinner with UN Resident Coordinator and UN country representatives and EU Member States hosted by H.E. Corrado Pampaloni, Ambassador of the European Union to The Gambia

**Wednesday 5 April 2023 - Banjul (The Gambia)**

08:30 - 09:20	Meeting with representatives of civil society
10:30 - 11:30	Visit of EU-funded project - the FANDEMA foundation in Tujereng
12:45 - 13:15	Press point by the AFET Chair
15:00 – 16:00	Meeting with Mr Emmanuel Joof, Chair of the National Human Rights Commission
16:30 – 17:30	Meeting with Mr Abubakarr Suleiman Jen, National Security Advisor of The Gambia
19:00 - 22:45	<i>Transfer to Dakar (Senegal)</i>

**Thursday 6 April 2022 - Dakar (Senegal)**

08:45 - 09:45	Briefing by H.E. Jean-Marc Pisani, Ambassador of the European Union to Senegal
10:00 - 11:00	Meeting with Ms Aïssata Tall Sall, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal
11:30 - 12:30	Meeting with the Mr Amadou Mame Diop, President of the National Assembly of Senegal, Mr Babacar Mbengue, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, and Members of the National Assembly
12:30 – 12:50	Joint Press point by the AFET Chair and the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly
15:00 - 16:30	Meeting with representatives of civil society
17:00 – 18:30	Meeting with EU Member States Ambassadors in Senegal
18:30	<i>End of official programme</i>

*Individual departures from Dakar*