

## REMARKS TO THE PRESS

**Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-general for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)**

**Dakar, Thursday 26 January 2017**

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*« The resolution of the crisis in The Gambia is a success of the regional preventive diplomacy »*

Good morning to everyone,

To start, let me take this opportunity to wish you all a happy new year 2017.

I hope it will be synonymous of peace and prosperity for our region and the whole continent.

West Africa and the Sahel region continues to face major challenges, including those related to security, which hamper its development and stability.

Boko Haram in Nigeria and the various armed groups operating in Mali, to name a few, still threaten peace in the region and beyond.

The mobilization of the countries of the region, with the support of the international community, remains fundamental to maintain the region in a dynamic of peace and progress.

But despite these challenges, commendable efforts are being made by countries and institutions of the region to put in place structural reforms in order to pursue democratic progress and improve governance.

The last presidential elections in Cabo Verde and Ghana, which resulted in constitutional changes, demonstrated the democratic maturity of political actors and voters, which should serve as a reference for other countries in the continent.

The Gambia could have completed this positive picture if the former President had not changed his mind and rejected the outcome of a credible and transparent election, which resulted in a political crisis that could have serious consequences for the Gambia and the region.

However, the determination of West African countries and of the international community through ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations to find a peaceful solution was decisive.

I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the Mediation under the leadership of ECOWAS - Presidents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, and John Mahama, former President of Ghana – as well as the perseverance - until the last minute - of leaders from the region through the initiatives of Presidents Ould Abdelaziz and Alpha Condé, to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

I would also like to pay tribute to the sustained efforts made by Senegal and its President, His Excellency Macky Sall, at the outset of the crisis, to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

It is the success of preventive diplomacy that has been achieved through the mobilization of regional actors in perfect coordination with the international community and in strict compliance with the Constitution, the laws of the Gambia and the principles of international law.

Of course, this success of preventive diplomacy must be consolidated by a peaceful and orderly transition.

I therefore call on the international community, which has demonstrated an exemplary unity in the peaceful resolution of the crisis, to continue to support the new Government of the Gambia.

I call on the new authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure a democratic transition that will consolidate peace between Gambians.

In this regard, I welcome the statement made by President Adama Barrow who announced that he will be "the President of all Gambians".

With the multiple challenges the new administration is facing, national reconciliation must be the priority.

Today, as the democratically elected President of the Gambia, Adama Barrow, is about to return home, a new page of the history of the Gambia is turned over.

I am convinced that the peaceful attitude and sense of responsibility shown by all Gambians during the crisis will continue to guide them in building the Gambia of tomorrow. A united and prosperous Gambia.

The United Nations, in coordination with other organizations in the region, will continue to support the new authorities in the Gambia in order to allow a democratic transition, respectful of human rights principles, and to initiate the necessary reforms to build the new Gambia.

Thank you for your attention.