

DRAFT
STATEMENT BY MR. VITALIE MUNTEAN, UNDP
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE a.i., ON THE OCCASION
OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE 2007/2008 GLOBAL
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT (GHDR) AND THE
YOUTH VERSION OF THE 2006 GHDR.

CORINTHIA (ATLANTIC) HOTEL, 25th MARCH 2008

Your Excellency the Vice President and Secretary of State
for Women's Affairs, Dr. Isatou Njie –Saidy,
The Honourable Speaker of The National Assembly, Madam
Fatoumatta Jahumpa Ceesay
The Secretary General Office of the President
Honourable Secretaries of State present here today
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Representatives of UN Agencies
Permanent Secretaries
Religious leaders
Members of the press
Distinguished guests, colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for me to deliver a statement on the
auspicious occasion of the launching of the 2007/8 GHDR
on the theme: **Fighting climate change: Human solidarity
in a divided world** and the Youth version of the 2006 GHDR
on **Water**.

The rationale behind the Human Development Reports
(HDRs), which measure such indicators as literacy, poverty,
access to health care and clean water to name just a few is
to reflect the achievements and challenges faced by different
countries seeking human well-being and not just laudable
socio-economic trends. For UNDP, Human Development
goes beyond mere rise or fall of national income. Rather, it is
about creating an environment in which people can develop

their full potentials and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their legitimate needs, interests and aspirations. Consequently, the HDR's messages and the tools to implement them have been embraced by people around the world, of course including the Gambia, evidenced by the publication of national human development reports at the country level in more than 120 countries.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are witnessing the joint Launching of the 2007/2008 GHDR and the Youth version of the 2006 GHDR. This Launch is taking place against the backdrop of an ever-increasing consensus among the scientific community, world leaders and the public at large, that global climate change is not just about a future scenario but a physical reality. This consensus is reflected in several global reports and events including: -

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report which focuses on climate science,
2. The Stern report on the economics of climate change
3. The G-8 summit on the need to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol by end of 2009
4. Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to IPCC and AL Gore for their contribution to the cause of climate change, and
5. The 2007/8 GHDR which focuses on people and how we are all affected by climate change

In 2006, the GHDR centered on water and for the first time in the history of the report, a youth version was produced. The youth version of the GHDR on water provides us with an opportunity to enhance our engagement with youths on development issues. Water is one of the essentials of life and a key factor for human development. As such everybody, particularly youths, would be interested to learn and be part of the discussions for addressing the challenges

and taking appropriate actions that will contribute to improved sector performance. Furthermore, getting the youths involved in development issues such as water will also assist in the enhancement of their personal development and leadership skills, which are indispensable for their life-saving skills.

The publication of the 2006 Human Development Report has re-focused international attention on the MDG water sanitation target and related water resources management and development issues. The HDR can thus serve as a catalyst to generate concerted action to address the water-poverty nexus and related MDG targets.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2007/2008 GHDR “Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world” is particularly challenging and timing.

Global warming is already altering the world’s climate. Scientific evidence suggests that temperatures are increasing, extreme weather events such as floods and droughts are increasing in incidence; and the sea levels are rising. The 2007/2008 GHDR identifies five tipping points, which could stall and then seriously reverse human development. These are:

1. Agricultural production and food security
2. Water stress and water insecurity
3. Rising sea levels and exposure to climate disasters
4. Securing health, especially for poor countries
5. Collapsing ecosystems

The above is just a snapshot of the global picture, but the implications of these changes for poor countries like the Gambia have become evident in the last few years. The adverse effects of climate change observed in The Gambia

over the last three decades include: coastal erosion, reduced rainfall and erratic nature of rains resulting to increased frequency of intensive rainfall and run-off causing severe floods in various parts of the country, drought, loss of biodiversity and decline in agricultural production.

To illustrate the point,

Before 2005, it would not have been possible to hold such an event at this very location. For those of you who could remember, the Gambia's coastline, including this very location, was seriously eroded to the point of threatening the hotel and related structures. However, the joint GOTG/AfDB beach nourishment project of 2003/2005 salvaged the situation by restoring much of the critically eroded coastal beaches. While it is possible to restore the impacts of climate change, let me hasten to say that the cost of restoration and mitigation far more outweighs the cost of prevention.

However, a number of other constraints exist with regards to ensuring resilience in the context of emerging climate change pressures. In the Gambian situation, such constraints include low capacity of national agencies, local authorities and vulnerable communities to effectively develop coping mechanisms and strategies on adaptation and disaster risk management, insufficient tools and systems to enable appropriate planning and implementation of climate change adaptation, and inadequate information on technological adaptation and sustainable development options.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

I do not in any way intend to paint a picture of doom and gloom, but rather to draw attention to the need for urgent and collective appropriate action. In this connection, the

report puts forward the following messages and measures for adaptation: The urgent need for a robust financing framework, estimated at US \$86 billion to protect the world's poor;

- More programmatic responses: An urgent need to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to assess climate change risks and to integrate adaptation into all aspects of national planning
- Inclusive responses: The need to empower and enable vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change by building resilience through investments in social protection, health, education and other measures;
- Committed and Concerted efforts: The need to expand multilateral provisions for responding to climate-related humanitarian emergencies and supporting post disaster recovery.
- The need for climate change mitigation which for Africa includes energy security and energy access

UNDP has forged partnership with the GOTG within the framework of 2007-2011 UNDAF and UNDP CPD to address some of the effects of climate change through such interventions as: The Gambia National Disaster Management Project, Regional climate and coastal change project and climate change sensitization project. Against this background, I would also like to re-assure you of UNDP's commitment to further enhance its support in addressing the adverse effects of climate change in The Gambia.

To conclude Your Excellency the VP, Ladies and Gentlemen

The 2007/8 GHDR has amply demonstrated and proven that the time to doubt the impacts of climate change has passed. We must therefore act now or never. If there is any consolation however, it is the fact that the adaptation and mitigation response options are largely in our hands, and we can therefore address the situation if we demonstrate sufficient collective will power. I am therefore confident that this launch of the GHDR will set the stage for many new initiatives and concrete actions to address the effects of climate change in The Gambia

I thank you all for your kind attention.