CRC Chairperson Praises Gambians Participation in Constitution Building

CRC meets the Ombudsman

CRC Dialogue with Gambian Political Parties

CRC Concludes Consultations with Diaspora Gambians

Using Music to Reach Out to the Masses

What People Say About the CRC?

Plus: Local Consultations with Institutions. CRC Meets HDP. IEC. Political Parties, etc.
FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON

Justice Cherno S. Jallow QC (JSC)

I welcome the second edition of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) Newsletter, following on shortly from the first edition. Once again, I commend the Head of Communications, Sainey Marenah, and his team for the wonderful job they are carrying out to ensure that Gambians and other stakeholders in the constitutional review process are well-informed with regard to the activities of the CRC.

The CRC has, through various consultative processes, been engaging Gambians at home and abroad to seek their views on the new Constitution that the CRC is mandated to draft for The Gambia. The CRC recognized from the onset that for a constitutional reform agenda to be efficiently and effectively pursued and accomplished, the contribution of Gambians to the process was necessary to craft a Constitution that would endure the test of time.

In our quest to draft a modern forward-looking Constitution that incorporates the core values of our people and nation and promotes national unity, cohesion, peace and respect among citizens, we are mindful and indeed constantly reminded of the expectations of Gambians. We are equally cognisant of the importance of taking into account The Gambia’s obligations under international law as well as issues that represent best practice in the design and development of a new Constitution.

Essentially, Gambians at home and abroad and our other stakeholders with whom the CRC has been able to interface through various mechanisms have given the CRC six major tasks. These are the following:

(a) The democratic governance of The Gambia must be given priority - the need to respect the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms;

(b) Governance institutions must be strengthened to uphold the values and the letter and spirit of the Constitution - the need to guard against abuse, and the arrogation of unchecked exercise, of power;

(c) Proper management of public finances and ensuring effective accountability in government - tackling corrupt behaviour and restoring public confidence in government as an institution;

(d) A development process whereby local government serves as a meaningful engine for national development - the need to empower local government authorities to ensure development from bottom-up;

(e) The importance of ensuring adequate checks and balances between the key Government institutions of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary with each being independent but providing a supportive role to each other as a mechanism for enhancing the democratic governance of The Gambia; and

(f) The need to adequately protect our natural environment - i.e. fisheries resources, forest (at least what is left of it), etc. - as well as our water and other natural resources (including the equitable sharing of those resources), and the equitable use and distribution of land in such responsible manner that the future generations of Gambians can equally benefit from.

These tasks are of no mean measure and indeed represent core values for effective democratic governance. We are confident that, through our collective efforts as Gambians and others with commendable interest in and support for the future development of The Gambia, we can achieve a Constitution we all can proudly take ownership of.

With the conclusion of the public consultative process on 15th July, 2019, the CRC is now concentrating its efforts in the design and drafting of the new Constitution. The valuable input of our citizens and other stakeholders in the Constitution-making process will continue to guide our actions as we embark on the process of drafting the new Constitution.

I use this opportunity to thank and commend all of our citizens, at home and in the diaspora, for their dedication, passion and commitment in the Constitution-building process. The CRC’s interactions with them has revealed their positive approach in viewing the constitutional review process as a national endeavour in which we all have a stake. Consequently, we must together continue the journey to its logical conclusion.

Finally, I commend this Newsletter to all of its readers as it provides interesting and insightful matters relative to the work of the CRC. Together as a people we can achieve!
WORD FROM THE CRC SECRETARY

In crafting a Constitution that stands the test of time, one has to deal with issues that are controversial and sometimes highly charged. The management of the expectations of the general public is far from easy and is one that the CRC deals with in deciding what should ultimately be given constitutional recognition.

We are pleased to inform readers that three of the five technical committees, namely the technical committee on Media, Public Education and Communication; the technical committee on Public Finance Management and the technical committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources are up and running and have been consulting relevant stakeholders that can add value to their work. This edition will also demonstrate that numerous stakeholder meetings have been organized to seek clarification from practitioners on submissions made to the CRC. Such dialogue sessions gave the Commission the opportunity to play the devil’s advocate in an effort to bring multiple perspectives to bear on the constitutional building process.

The review of the 1997 Constitution offers a unique opportunity to build a robust, progressive Constitution for The Gambia. The Constitutional Review Commission has from inception been making deliberate efforts to involve Gambians in the decision making process through consultations and has kept them abreast of developments every step of the way. This second edition of the CRC newsletter, like the maiden version, showcases the different strategies that the Commission employed to reach out to Gambians and to get the best out of them to inform the new Constitution. Gambians stood up and want to be counted by giving a free vent to their desires and aspirations for a better Gambia. They understood that the review process is ‘one in a life time opportunity’ to lay the foundation and the framework for better laws, better institutions, a better governance system. Gambians are of the opinion that the thoroughness of the consultations proves that the process is worth every dalasi spent on it. For us at the CRC, participation, ownership and transparency are not mere buzz words. They serve as guiding principles and rules of engagement.

"A Constitution that is built on trust and is people-centred, people-driven and embodies the wishes and aspirations of a people will stand the test of time“

Omar Ousman Jobe
Secretary - CRC
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sainey MK Marenah
Head of Media and Communication
Editor in Chief

“Keeping you in tune with the building of the new Gambian Constitution”

Dear Readers,
A warm welcome to this month’s edition of the Constitutional Review Commission Newsletter.

At the media and communications department, we hold the newsletter with great pride as one of the numerous platforms we have established to ensure that the constitutional review process is transparent, inclusive, and engaging.

We are active on our official website (www.crc220.org) and social media sites including Facebook @ Constitutional Review Commission, The Gambia, and on Twitter.

A vibrant relationship with the Gambian media is strongly manifested on the pages of newspapers and the airtime dedicated to the CRC process. Our periodic press releases and news conference also avails us the unique opportunity to reach every nook and cranny of the country.

The first edition was a blockbuster! Its impact in expanding our communication outreach is beyond measure. The reactions of readers are incredible and goes far to show that Gambians, both at home and the diaspora, are keenly following the developments at the Commission with an ardent sense of ownership.

In this edition, we will keep you abreast with the latest developments at the Commission. These include our various stakeholder consultations, reception of official visitors, impressions of Gambians on the CRC review process, consultations with Gambians in the diaspora and many other newsworthy articles for your consumption.

We have also provided a special review/coverage of our in-country consultations. You will find stories of this historic nationwide tour and pictures that portray the sense of participation Gambians attach to the review process.

As we look forward to drafting the ‘People’s Constitution’ Gambians aspire for, we will continue to seek opinions from the entire citizenry through different platforms.

As part of our communications strategy, we have established a relationship with reputable Gambian artists in a bid to reach out to a huge audience, particularly the young people. They have produced sensitization songs that have become anthems of the CRC’s pursuit to build a constitution that stands the test of time.

More than ever before, we are committed to our mandate of giving Gambians a constitution that reflects the needs, aspirations and views of all Gambians. While wishing you a happy read, we ask that you look forward to our August edition as we line up more fascinating stories for you.
MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has continued to engage more Gambians living in the diaspora as part of efforts to build a new Constitution for The Gambia that will stand the test of time. The latest engagements target Gambians resident in the United States. Gambians in the diaspora, who are generally regarded as the eighth region, are crucial stakeholders in the ongoing national dialogue on constitutional reform, hence the need to consult with them.

#CRCTeamUS commenced its external consultations with Gambians in Seattle, Minneapolis, Washington DC, Raleigh, Atlanta and New York with impressive turnout at the meetings. Addressing the Seattle consultation, the Gambian Ambassador to the United States, H.E Dawda Fadera, said the CRC consultation with Gambians in America is an important exercise as it provides a great opportunity for them to contribute towards the constitutional building process. Ambassador Fadera further told participants at various meetings in the United States that: “The authorities for the first time have ensured the inclusion and participation of The Gambian diaspora in the constitutional building process which is indeed commendable. The diaspora have the experience, the expertise and the exposure to significantly contribute towards the Constitutional review process.”

The Chairman of the CRC, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow QC (JSC), reminded Gambians at various US meetings of the mandate of the CRC which he said are clearly outlined in the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017.

Justice Jallow commended Gambians living in the Diaspora for their dedication, passion and commitment in the Constitution building process, saying that ‘everybody sees the process as a national endeavour and this has been helping the CRC.’ He reminded the Gambian diasporans that the CRC started its public consultations in The Gambia where, within four months, the CRC consulted 106 communities.
He said it is important to have a face-to-face dialogue with Gambians in the diaspora ‘because living outside The Gambia does not make you less Gambian than Gambians living in The Gambia’.

Meanwhile, #CRCTeamEurope also returned home after a successful completion of its European tour which took the team to five European countries, namely United Kingdom (London), France (Paris), Germany (Berlin), Sweden (Stockholm) and Spain (Ginora).

The external public consultations, according to the CRC Chairman, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, are meant to seek the views and aspirations of Gambians living outside of The Gambia ahead of the drafting of a new Constitution for The Gambia.

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“A Constitution is far too fundamental to be representative of only eleven minds. The best we can do is to ensure proper representation in the making of the new Constitution, to be inclusive, and to create appropriate platforms for Gambians to participate and take ownership of the process,” the CRC Chairman emphasized.

CRC EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF POSITION PAPERS

As part of efforts to seek the opinions of all Gambians both at home and abroad on the drafting of the new Constitution, the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) informed the public that it would continue to receive submissions / position papers until the 15th of July, 2019.

Beyond that date, the Commission would only be focusing on the drafting of the new Constitution. The mandate of the CRC requires it to consult with Gambians and other stakeholders to seek their opinions on what they aspire to see included in the new Constitution for The Gambia.

In that context, the CRC developed an ‘Issues Document’ which raised specific issues to guide public considerations in the drafting of the new Constitution. Some responses were provided in writing and addressed to the CRC at its headquarters at the Futurelec Building, Bertil Harding Highway, Kotu.

Persons / institutions were also able to submit by email to info@crc220.org or crcgambia@gmail.com and persons residing in the Administrative Regions who wished to submit written responses did so through the CRC Regional Coordinators stationed at the Regional offices or by email. Our Public Participation Platform link can be accessed from any part of the world on: https://survey.crc220.org/survey/dVgD42.
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), as part of its wider public consultations with Gambians, commenced its external public consultations from the 16th June to 22nd June 2019, with Gambians in the Diaspora with successful meetings in London, UK and Paris, France. Gambians in the diaspora have been demonstrating keen interest designing a new Constitution for The Gambia.

Speaking at the London Meeting, The Gambian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, H.E. Francis R. Blain, commended the CRC for extending its arms to Gambians in the diaspora describing the move as ‘very democratic’.

“As the High Commissioner of the Gambia to the United Kingdom, I am particularly proud and delighted to be part of this historic event,” he said.

The Chairman of the CRC, Hon. Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow QC (JSC) reminded the London and Paris meetings of the power and mandate of the CRC which he said are clearly outlined in an act of Parliament, namely the CRC Act, 2017. In essence, the mandate of the CRC is to review the current 1997 Constitution and draft a new Constitution for The Continuing, the Chairman underscored the importance of providing a level playing field for all Gambians during the constitutional review process.

“We can’t draw a line between Gambians within The Gambia and Gambians outside of The Gambia, irrespective of where you are residing or where you are resident permanently, you are still a Gambian. So what a Gambian living within The Gambia deserves, a Gambian residing outside The Gambia equally deserves.”

He said: “It is going to be an expensive process and an expensive undertaking, but it is one that is worth it, because Gambians in the diaspora have a right to participate in the same process that Gambians within the country have the opportunity to do’.

Chairman Jallow further told the gathering that: “We have a huge task collectively as citizens to ensure that the ideas we canvass, the opinions we exchange will be those that will be representative of the interests of The Gambia of today and Gambia in the future, not about our personal interests.”

The Deputy Ambassador of The Gambia to France, H.E Dr. Mariam John, also encouraged Gambians resident in
France to participate and support the constitutional review process. She emphasized that Gambians deserve a better and prosperous Constitution that will guide the country towards the Promised Land. Meanwhile, a similar meeting was held in the French capital of Paris, where Gambians turned out in large numbers to share their opinions with the CRC on how they wish to have their country governed. Like the London meeting, the Paris engagement was enriching as key issues surrounding citizenship, fundamental human rights, governance, legislature, judiciary, and executive, among others, were discussed. In particular, participants lamented the state of the country’s education and health service delivery systems, including concern regarding the speed at which the national environment is being degraded and depleted and called for strong constitutional provisions to safeguard, protect and strengthen these key areas of national importance.

In both London and Paris, the Gambian diaspora called for unity and national cohesion if the next Constitution is to deliver the wishes and aspirations of the Gambian people. They called for strong State institutions that will deliver good governance and uphold the rule of law, for it is only through such mechanism that The Gambia can avoid a periodic review of its Constitution. They emphasized the importance of crafting a new Constitution that not only reflects the wishes and aspirations of Gambians, but also represents the interests of the future generations of Gambians. Similar meetings were held in Stockholm (Sweden), Berlin (Germany) and Girona (Spain). The CRC’s external consultations in North America commenced on Saturday, 22nd June, 2019.
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has conducted successful meetings with key stakeholders in the country. The series of stakeholder consultations began on 12th of May, 2019 with Political Parties and it was followed by the Legislature, the Judiciary, the Executive, and the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Human Rights Commission, Security Services, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Lands Commission.

The meetings were aimed at eliciting the views and aspirations of key stakeholders on specific constitutional provisions as part of the review process. During its meeting with the Executive at State House in Banjul on Thursday 16th May, 2019, President Adama Barrow commended the Commission for its commitment in achieving the objectives of its mandate. ‘I think it is very important that we consult as a country. We (the Executive) are independent and will not interfere with your work, but we are citizens also and we have opinions too,’ he noted. He emphasized the need to build a constitution that will reflect the wishes of the people in order to for it to be generally accepted and embraced.

‘Our main objective is to build a strong foundation for democracy for this country. And this document is very important as far as that is concerned,’ the President said. Speaking at the Commission’s office on Wednesday 15th May, 2019, the Chief Justice Hon. Hassan B. Jallow, leading a high profile delegation from the judiciary said they look forward to seeing a Constitution that would stand the
Continued from page 8

test of time. He added that the rule of law is a prerequisite for a peaceful society and hailed the CRC for the approach it is employing in seeking the views and aspirations of Gambians.
The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, speaking at a consultation in the National Assembly, commended the Commission for engaging key stakeholders in its quest to develop a constitution that will be for all Gambians. Reacting to CRC Dialogue with key stakeholders, the Chairman of the Constitutional Review Commission, Justice Cherno Suleyman said: “The CRC recognized from the inception of the Commission that it needed to consult with Gambians and other key stakeholders in designing and developing a new Constitution for The Gambia. We have received full support for our approach and all persons and institutions we’ve consulted with thus far have taken the consultation process seriously. Consequently, this has added value to the CRC’s work. We are truly grateful for the level and quality of public participation received from key Government institutions.”

SECURITY FORCES COMMEND CRC’S PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN ELICITING OPINIONS

Heads and representatives of the various security forces commended the Constitutional Review Commission’s (CRC) participatory approach in eliciting opinions from stakeholders as it prepares to write a new constitution for the Republic of the Gambia. These remarks were echoed during CRC’s consultative meeting with security forces on Thursday 22nd May, 2019 at the Baobab Resort Hotel in Kololi. The consultative meeting was part of the CRC stakeholder’s engagements meant to understand the nature of key security sector institutions and solicit expert opinions as to what they want the new draft constitution of the Republic of the Gambia to address. The meeting was also availed the CRC of the opportunity to seek clarifications and explanations from the security forces on various issues highlighted in their written submissions to the commission.

The National Security Adviser, Mr. Momodou Badjie, said the criteria and approach used by the CRC is participatory and will deliver a good result. Badjie explained that the national security sector is to ensure protection against both national and international threats and also ensure the protection of rights enshrined in the constitution. In his remarks, the Chairman of CRC, Justice Cherno Sulyman Jallow, noted that the purpose of the CRC consultation with the security sector was to learn more from the security forces, given that in writing a new constitution, it is important to understand the nature of the institutions. “This will help the commission to not only incorporate the ideas, but have a better understanding of the institutions. Continuing, he said it was important for the security sector to
understand the nature of the institutions. “This will help the commission to not only incorporate the ideas, but have a better understanding of the institutions. Continuing, he said it was important for the security sector to converse with the Commission in different capacities to design and develop a Constitution that will work for all Gambians,” Justice Jallow remarked.

The meeting was attended by Lt. General Ma Sanneh Kinteh, Chief of Defense Staff of the Gambia Armed Forces; Mr. Momar Jobe, Inspector General of Police; Mr. Yankuba Darboe, Commissioner General, Gambia Revenue Authority; Mr. Momodou Badjie, National Security Adviser; Mr. Tijan Bah, Deputy Director, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency; Mr. Raymond Jarju, Director General, Gambia Fire and Rescue Services; Brig. General Mamat Cham, Commander, Gambia National Army; Commodore Madani Senghore, Commander, Gambia Navy; other top security officials.
Hawa Kuru Sisay-Sabally, the Vice Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Commission is a practising lawyer and a graduate of the University of West Indies. She is a trained draftsperson and enjoys drafting laws as well as undertaking legal research and writing. She had over the past successfully challenged the constitutionality of laws that had the effect of stifling freedom of speech and expression as well as those that put a fetter on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. She brings into the Constitutional Review Commission a wealth of experience as a seasoned lawyer with vast experience in many areas of the law. She was recently awarded Press Freedom Champion by The Gambia Press Union in recognition of her contributions towards press freedom in The Gambia.
MEET THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

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HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

SAM ALI ASHCROFT
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OMAR OUSMAN JOBE
SECRETARY

SAINEY M.K. MARENAH
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

MOHAMMED HASSAN LOUM
HEAD OF PROGRAMMES
The Chief Justice of the Gambia, Hassan B. Jallow, has said that the rule of law is a prerequisite for peace, saying without justice, the country cannot sustain peace and progress. He made this remark during the Constitutional Review Commission’s consultative meeting with the Judiciary on Wednesday 15th May, 2019 at the CRC secretariat in Kotu.

He said behind the rule of law lies an efficient and independent judiciary system. Chief Justice said the new constitution should entrench good governance based on democracy and respect for the rule of law in order to ensure the independence of the judicial system,” 7 “The judiciary is envisaging a constitution that will endure for generations to come and for it to be able to do so, it must be a Constitution that meets the aspirations of the people of the Gambia, a Constitution that is politically non-partisan and which needs to be a framework document that is not overloaded as the previous document (1997 Constitution),” he noted. Chief Justice Jallow highlighted the significance of an independent, impartial and efficient system for the administration of justice.

The Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, said the CRC is mandated to review the current 1997 Constitution and to prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. According to Justice Jallow, the Commission has been consulting around the country and have used different platforms just to make sure that the CRC reaches all strata of society both within and outside the country.

He added: “We commenced with the internal public consultations going around the country, meeting with the community at their ‘bantabas’ and seeking their opinions on constitutional review issues and it has been an enlightening journey for the CRC.” He pointed out that in addition to the online Public Participation Platform (PPP), the CRC also created an online platform system where people will go and answer questions coming from the ‘Issues Document’ in order to participate and make suggestions with regards to constitutional reform process.
CRC engages NAMs on the review process

The Constitution Review Commission (CRC) on Tuesday 14th May, 2019 held a consultative meeting with Members of the National Assembly at the legislative chambers in Banjul.

The meeting was part of CRC’s strategies employed to meet key stakeholders in addition to conducting internal and external consultations with Gambians to solicit their opinions on what they wish to see in the draft constitution. The meeting also allowed the CRC to seek further explanations and clarifications from the members of Parliament on issues highlighted in their written submission to the CRC for consideration.

In his introductory remarks, the Chairman of CRC, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow said the purpose of the consultative meeting was to consult members of the House on the principles and procedures outlined in the CRC Act, 2017 passed by Parliament to seek opinions as to what should be in the new draft constitution.

Justice Jallow further said one of the fundamental objectives of the CRC is to ensure national cohesion, unity and peace which are in line with the motto of CRC, that is: Participation, Ownership, Inclusiveness and Transparency.

He maintained that the Commission has not reached the stage of drafting the new constitution because they wish to finish the consultations first. He explained that in relation to the Constitution, the Commission will prepare a report explaining the process and procedures employed by the CRC in writing the draft Constitution and will as well document the opinions of Gambians that are not constitutional matters, but concern the people.

He echoed that all opinions cannot be in the Constitution, but that what matters is that they will greatly help the Commission to devise a Constitution that everybody will be proud of.

The speaker of the National Assembly, Mariam Jack-Denton, thanked the CRC for engaging the National Assembly in the constitutional building process. She further said meeting the National Assembly alone is like meeting the entire country as they represent the entire country.
CRC MEETS WITH THE LAND COMMISSION

The Chairman of the National Land Commission, Justice Raymond Sock has said that the absence of a comprehensive land policy has hindered the work of the Lands Commission, saying the new constitution should have a comprehensive Lands policy that is explicit and inclusive with the view to ameliorate land issues in the country.

He made these remarks in Constitutional Review Commission’s consultative meeting with the newly constituted National Land Commission on Friday 24th May, 2019 held at the CRC Secretariat in Kotu.

Justice Sock stated that, for proper land policy to be realized, there should be regional land management offices at all regions to facilitate enforcement. He also stressed the need for the Constitution to be elaborative and explicit on land matters.

He said in view of the growing high density of population in The Gambia, there is a need to have a proper administration of lands especially public lands. Such a gap, he added, has resulted in serious encroachment on lands reserved for both agricultural and other socio-cultural needs and activities.

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Lands Commission proposed the establishing of regional lands committees where some of the members would come from relevant committees.

The Chairman of CRC, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, gave an overview of the CRC’s public consultation process. He talked about the disappointment and frustration expressed by Gambians in terms of poor Land management system in the country.

He also lamented the fact that over the past 20 years, not much has been done to resolve land and land-related tensions.

CRC Commissioner, Janet R. Sallah-Njie, stressed the need for greater integration among relevant ministries and institutions and advocated for government to put in place more viable mechanisms to ensure greater control on land.
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has successfully held a consultation with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) at the CRC Secretariat in Kotu on the 20th May, 2019.
The Chairman of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow remarked that the CRC is charged with a huge national responsibility and that is to review the current constitution and write a new one. He expressed that liaising and eliciting opinions from the public both at home and abroad are some of the most important aspects the mandate of the CRC. This, he said, demands general public involvement and it could be the most relevant endeavor in terms of setting up a new political dispensation.
The chairperson said the Commission is still canvassing for new and diverse opinions and it is looking at specific matters that has not yet been discussed, adding that it necessitated the consultation with the NHRC as their expertise will add value to the work of the CRC.
Justice Jallow said they see themselves in the review process as merely leading the process but not necessarily dictating what goes into the Constitution, ‘What goes into the Constitution ultimately is a

He added: ‘The CRC received opinions from Gambians as stakeholders and will analyze them and then determine where the weight of opinions lie with respect to every particular subject matter.’
The Chairperson of the NHRC, Emanuel Joof, said the commission has a mandate of promoting and protecting human rights and that it also has investigative powers and a monitoring role.
Continuing, he said the NHRC also worked with the Gambia Center for Victims of Human Rights Violations and the Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) on this year’s commemoration of the April 10th and 11th Students’ Protest. The NHRC, he added, submitted a report for the Universal Periodic Review as The Gambia is due for review in November.
Joof urged that the new Constitution promote women empowerment and give fundamental human rights to the citizens.
Chairperson Joof said the 1997 Constitution dealt with economic, social and cultural rights in very general terms but that it needs to be clearly spelled out as is the case in countries like India and South Africa.
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), is established under the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017. Its mandate is two-fold: firstly, to review the 1997 Constitution and draft a new Constitution for The Gambia; secondly, to prepare a report in respect of the new Constitution. The Act empowers the CRC under section 11 to establish such technical committees as it considers necessary to facilitate and assist with the work of the CRC.

To this effect, the Technical Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources was created alongside four other technical committees. The Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources was inaugurated in April 2019, and comprises of five experts chosen from outside the CRC. They are Mr. Lamin Comma; Mr. Momodou B. Sarr; Mrs. Ndey Sireng Bakurin; Mr. Gallo Saidu and Dr. Raymond Jatta. Commissioner Lamin S. Camara is the Chairperson of the committee and Commissioner Dr. Melville George is the Vice-Chairperson.

The Committee embarked on relevant stakeholder consultations nationwide designed to better understand issues relating to land, environment and natural resources from the perspective of key stakeholders and experts.

The committee set out on a 30-day stakeholders' consultations tour which started Monday 27th May 2019 and ended on Friday 28th June 2019. It involved local government authorities; relevant ministries; National Assembly select committees on land and environment; international and local environmental NGOs. The approach is meant to understand issues from the policy level to implementation level. The Committee is scheduled to meet 57 relevant key stakeholders across the country.

While the consultations continued, the Committee met the following stakeholders: 25 Alkalos, 5 Chiefs, 2 Regional Governors, 6 NGOs, 3 Area Councils, 3 agencies, 14 Departments, 2 select committees of the national assembly and 5 ministries.
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) recently launched a technical committee on Media, Public Education and Communications (MPECC) tasked with offering advice and expert views ahead of the drafting process of the new Constitution for The Gambia. The five-man committee, which includes prominent media practitioners and communication specialists, has since begun work in earnest following the swearing-in of its members in April, 2019.

The terms of reference of MPECC include determining the nature and scope of the provisions related to the press and other information media and whether those provisions are capable of achieving the desired level of press freedom and other media issues relating to independence in a democratic setting. The committee is further tasked to develop a designed framework that will serve the purpose of transfer of media, public education and communication knowledge and best practice in relation to the constitution-making process and advise the CRC accordingly.

The Act empowers the CRC under section 11 to establish technical committees, with each technical committee being chaired by a Commissioner, to facilitate and assist with the work of the CRC. In line with that provision, five (5) technical Committees have been established, three (3) of which have already been inaugurated and their members have subscribed to an oath of confidentiality before the Chairperson of the CRC in accordance with the terms of the Act. The established technical committees are: Public Finance Management, chaired by Commissioner Fatoumata Jallow and assisted by Commissioner Salimatta Touray; Land, Environment and Natural Resources, chaired by Commissioner Lamin Camara and assisted by Commissioner
Dr. Melville George; Media, Public Education and Communication, chaired by Commissioner Amie Joof-Cole and assisted by Commissioner Yankuba Dibba. The remaining two technical committees, namely: Committee of Experts on Constitutional Law, chaired by Hawa Kuru Ceesay-Sabally (Vice-Chairperson of the CRC) and Constitution Drafting and Report Writing Technical Committee, chaired by Commissioner Janet Sallah-Njie, will be launched in due course.

The MPECC Members include: Emile Touray, former President of The Gambia Press Union; Demba Kande, Journalism Trainer/Lecturer; Omar Wally, a journalist; Mamading Kuyateh, a development specialist; and Sering Fye, Media/Communication expert. The committee is being chaired by CRC Commissioners: Amie Joof-Cole and assisted by Yankuba Dibba and Yankuba Manjang who are also supported by the CRC staff in the persons of Mr. Sainey MK Marenah, Head of Communications, Saffiatou Savage-Sidibeh, Civic Education officer, Ebrima Jarju, Researcher, and Momodou L. Jaiteh, Notes taker.

CRC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

The CRC’s Technical Committee on Public Finance is tasked with the responsibility of reviewing, analyzing and making recommendations in relation to Public Finance Management as identified by The Gambia’s Constitutional Review Commission. The Committee is currently reviewing and analyzing existing institutional arrangements, laws and policies of The Gambia relevant to Public Finance Management taking into consideration existing local as well as global contexts and advise on how fundamental these are and if necessary establish constitutional recognition and protection where needed.

It seeks to support the CRC in developing a Constitution that will in the future be able to sustain a better quality of life for its people, provide a competitive economy, effective and efficient Public Services and Public Financial Management. Some of the expected outputs of the Technical Committee include; Preparation and Provision of Statutory Monthly Progress Reports on works and activities being carried out by the public finance Management Committee as well as a final report outlining its advice, opinions, conclusions and recommendations on such matters to be incorporated into The Gambia’s Constitutional and other public financial legislations.

In brief, public financial management is the process through which financial resources are derived, controlled and utilized in a transparent and accountable manner for the purpose of effective and efficient delivery of social security and other services to the citizenry. The cycle of public finance management revolves around budget preparation, approval, and implementation, monitoring and reporting processes.

Overall, the CRC’s Technical Committee on Public Finance Management is looking at globally-recognized measures and best practices that are relevant in the CRC’s Review Process.

The members of the Public Finance Management Technical Committee are: Alhaji T.S. Aliou Njie; Alpha Amadou Barry; Mamour Jagne; Anthony Ademola Taylor and Momodou Ceesay.
The CRC Communications Department sampled the views of Gambians on their expectations in relation to the drafting of a new Constitution. The CRC has engaged Gambians both at home and abroad in building a Constitution that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of Gambians. This process, however, has received diverse views and various expectations from Gambians. These views and expectations differ sharply from person to person depending on what they make of the establishment of the Commission and its mandate.

**Adama Njie, a private security officer** recommended an impartial and independent legislative body in the new Constitution. He stressed that the legislature is a fundamental organ of the government taking into account its oversight function. “The Chief Justice must be a Gambian. This is because we have quite a number of Gambians that have the capacity to man the position,” he said.

**Ebrima Jawo, a mechanic,** suggested that citizenship by descent should be maintained in the new Constitution. He argued that Gambian citizenship should not be cheaply acquired. “We need factories for gainful employment for the youth. This should be featured in the new Constitution,” he demanded.

**Fanta Jabang, police constable at Kotu Police Station,** shared the view that the IEC Chairperson should be elected by an independent body and not by the President. “I want to see in the new Constitution that the prisoners and Gambians in the diaspora are granted the right to vote in our elections. Also, the powers of nomination should be taken away from the president, and allow only the elected members to occupy the

**Isatou Jallow, a fruit vendor,** said Chieftaincy and Alkaloship should be based on lineage. “The new Constitution should empower the business community by committing the government to build standard markets designated for buying and selling of goods,” she stated.

**Modou Lamin Ceesay, a civil servant at GRA** said: “The new Constitution should herald a chapter in our history. Fidelity to the Constitution, strict adherence to the rule of law and above all fear of Allah should become the order of the day.” He recommended a Constitution that in reality will reflect the true will, culture, religion, custom and the holistic development aspirations and necessities of the people of The Gambia.
Ebrima L. Dampha, the president of the University of The Gambia Students' Union (UTGSU) said the new Constitution should introduce an absolute majority system of elections. “This will ensure a majority government to take charge of the state. This is democratic and in line with the conventional system of governance,” Dampha opined.

He called for an open age limit for the presidency with minimum academic qualification. He contested that the power of nomination should be stripped off the presidency.

Fatoumatta J. Jallow, a member of Your Change for a Change, expressed hope and confidence about the outcome of the CRC’s work of designing a new Constitution. She expected to see in the new Constitution a change on how citizenship is acquired in The Gambia. “Citizenship ought to be acquired by birth. What will be the fate of children born in The Gambia to foreign parents? They will become stateless,” she quizzed.

Jallow also suggested the death penalty should be removed from the new Constitution. “Subjecting our subjects to death is gruesome and far-fetched” she stated.

Rohey Jadama, a journalist said the new Constitution should clearly stipulate and entrench two term limit for the presidency and make budget formulation more participatory for citizens. “I am looking forward to a Constitution that promotes freedom of speech, assembly and remove sectors that subject marriage, divorce and inheritance to personal laws,” she advocated.
Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, the chairman of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has acknowledged that the essence of the in-country public consultations was to have a framework in place that ensures good governance in the drafting of a new Constitution.

The CRC chairman made these remarks when the chairman of the Mansakonko Area Council and his team paid a courtesy call on the officials of the CRC commissioners at Mansakonko.

He stressed that: "as a Commission, we believe in the process of engaging people so that we can hear from everybody with a view to getting their ideas regarding what they want to be included in the new Constitution."

The visit, officials said, was to meet the CRC and discuss with them the possibility of organising a one-day forum for area councils.

"Your initiative is commendable and is welcome. We are going to sit as a team and discuss your proposal. Certainly, your initiative will be helpful in engaging Gambians on what they want," Jallow told Mansakonko Area Council delegates.

The CRC chair added that there were lots of issues that came out during the ongoing public consultation tour.

The chairman of the Mansakonko Area Council, Landing Sanneh, said the inputs of all in the drafting of a new Constitution will be significant.

Mr Sanneh pointed out that the 1997 Constitution underwent several changes and it would be crucial that The Gambia produce a Constitution that will be reflective of people's aspirations and is one that will not be easily subjected to changes.

Hawa K. Sisay-Sabally, the vice-chair of the CRC informed the delegates that they were going to sit and discuss the proposals. She believed it would be important for them to consult other area councils across the country with the possibility of having a day-long workshop on issues concerning the drafting of the new Constitution.

Ousman Sonko, the vice-principal of the Rural Development Institute (RDI) dwelled on the importance of a new Constitution, saying he aspires for a Constitution that will reflect the aspirations of the Gambian people.
CIVIC EDUCATION OFFICER: A NATION WITHOUT A CONSTITUTION IS LIKE A BOAT WITHOUT A CAPTAIN

The Constitutional Review Constitution’s Civic Education Officer, Saffiatou Savage-Sidibe h has indicated that a nation without a Constitution is like a boat without a captain.

On Friday, 27 October, 2018, Madam Savage-Sidibe made that statement in Kuntaur, North Bank Region during a nationwide Public Education campaign by the Constitutional Review Commission and National Council for Civic Education (NCCE).

She informed the audience that the motive of their mission was aimed at educating the public about the CRC’s mandate for the drafting of a new Constitution. She urged Gambians to participate and take the ownership of the process. She further informed the audience that the CRC is apolitical and is open for every Gambian to contribute their views in shaping the fundamental law of the land.

She also challenged women to contribute to the constitution-making process, stating that women are mothers, teachers and doctors in society.

She added that women should try and understand the issues raised in the ‘Issues Document’ and develop ideas as to what should be part of the laws, particularly on issues affecting women.

Also speaking at the meeting, the Chairman of NCCE, Mr. Sering Fye said their mission was to sensitise people ahead of the CRC public consultation team for submissions of views to the CRC commissioners. He urged community members to take the exercise as a serious one so that they can forward their suggestions as to what they want captured in the new Constitution.

Bakary Ceesay, a participant at the meeting said that the meeting was very useful to him, noting that certain laws needed to be reviewed for the common good.

Alhagie Ousman Sinyan also expressed his satisfaction for the presence of the CRC delegation in his hometown, saying that this civic education exercise centred on the Constitution making-process would help them greatly in broadening their understanding in the shaping of the new Constitution.
'NO GAMBIAN WILL BE LEFT BEHIND', CRC'S VICE CHAIRPERSON ASSURES

Hawa K. Sisay-Sabally, Vice-Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has assured Gambians that no Gambian will be left behind in the CRC public consultation process. She said even those that do not have the chance to be present at some meetings can still participate by liaising with their regional coordinators.

She was speaking at Nguyen Sanjal, Sabach Sanjal District, North Bank Region where she called on Gambians to take ownership of the constitutional review process.

She revealed that as part of their plans to capture the views of every Gambian, participants should contact the regional coordinators by sending their contributions to them. According to the CRC Vice-Chair, it has been a big sacrifice on the side of the farmers despite their busy schedules on their farms. She observed that the massive sensitisation carried out by the Commission has been responsible for the mass turnout of the rural people for such an important national discourse.

She pointed out that there is a huge difference between the procedures employed in the building of the 1997 Constitution and this one. Gambian people have told us that they have never been consulted and this time, the Commission is here to consult them. Modou Jagne, the CRC regional coordinator for North Bank Region also expressed delight towards the participation of the people in his region.

Jagne said most of the people in his region are mainly farmers and having taken their time to grace the consultation shows their resolve to having a good Constitution.

Jagne revealed that the massive turnout of the people at the CRC gatherings indicates his region's readiness for a good Constitution that will reflect their wishes.
LADY COUNCILOR DEMANDS FOR WOMEN LAND OWNERSHIP

Fatou Fatty, a lady councilor in Naimina Dankunku District of Central River Region said that the new Constitution should give rights to women to access and own lands.

"The new Constitution should empower women both in decision-making processes and for women to be in key government positions," Fatou made these demands to the CRC’s public forum in Dankunku.

She opined that local languages should be spoken at the National Assembly as the majority of Gambians cannot speak English. She said that women councillors across the country should also be paid salaries.

Also speaking, Sheriff Mboge opined that the single majority system of elections should be maintained in the new Constitution.

Mboge stated that it would be proper for our NAMs to have a university degree and the president to have at least a master’s degree before contesting for election.

He suggested that all local languages should be spoken at the National Assembly to enable citizens understand the debate. A Health Service Commission (HSC), a Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and an Agriculture Services Commission (AGS) should be included in the new Constitution, Mboge stated. Gambians in the Diaspora who have the required documentation, he added, should have the right to vote in our elections, whilst suggesting that the new Constitution should deter prison inmates from voting.

MAINTAINING THE MARBLE-VOTING SYSTEM

At a meeting in Kerewan in Touray village, in the Naimina East District, Alh. Kebba Touray - the district chief told the CRC that the death penalty should be removed and be substituted with life imprisonment.

He also added that the Constitution should deter the president from pardoning people who commit murder. He further suggested that 15 years requirement for naturalisation is too short. He suggested at least a period of 20 years and that the applicants must be law-abiding individuals.

Mod Mbaye suggested the marble system of voting to be maintained, indicating that paper balloting can be forged and there will be no transparency. He added that any person born in The Gambia should be a Gambian.
CRC CONSULTS THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

He thanked the IEC delegation for meeting the Commission and further told the delegation that the meeting ought to be a ‘free and frank’ dialogue as the CRC always does. Justice Jallow said opinions will help them to shape the drafting of the Constitution.

Justice Jallow reiterated that the CRC dialogue with stakeholders such as the IEC will help them to learn about issues that the Independent Electoral Commission is dealing with and issues the IEC might deem relevant in strengthening institutional functionality.

Alieu Momarr Njie, the Chairman of the IEC commended the CRC for facilitating the dialogue between the two institutions with a view to contributing their quota towards shaping the constitutional reform process.

Mr. Njie explained that there is a need for the new Constitution to have provisions that allow Gambians in the diaspora to vote and be voted for. Also part of their wishes is for all the elections to be held on the same day and for the electoral commission to have the powers to demarcate boundaries for elections.


The chairman of the CRC, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow welcomed the IEC delegation and re-echoed the importance of the IEC among key stakeholders that the CRC value in the process of the drafting process of a new Constitution.
CRC INVOLVES PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

CRC’s Engagement with PWDs

From the very beginning, the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has been engaging and consulting Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as part of its principle of inclusiveness. This is an actual fulfilment of its core mandate prescribed by the Act that established it. Various strategies aimed at bringing PWDs to the fore have been taken and notable among them is the appointment of a Sign Language Interpreter to interface with special groups.

In demonstrating the commission’s commitment to include all strata of Gambian society in the review process, the CRC acting on the principles of participation, inclusion, transparency, and ownership has tried to reach out to all minorities. A ramp had been built at the secretariat to give access to wheelchair users. Promoting the use of sign language to pass on messages to the hard-of-hearing has been ensured. Additionally, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been translated into Braille for the visually impaired.

Moving across the length and breadth of the country with a view to consulting with Gambians, the CRC held consultative meetings in one hundred and six (106) communities internally. In that outreach activity, the Commission consulted with various types of persons with disabilities ranging from the Deaf, Visually Impaired, Physically Disabled to Albinos resident in different geographical locations in the country such as Fass Njaga Choi, Madina Sherign Mass, Kerewan, Kinteh Kunda, Farafenni, Jarra Soma, Bansang, Bwiam, Brikama, Busumbala, Farato, Sanyang village, Sukuta, Latrikunda Sabijji, Latri Kunda German, Dippa Kunda, Faji Kunda, Banjul among others.

As with other marginalized groups, the CRC created a window of opportunity for the PWDs to make submissions relevant to their plight in terms of what they want to see in the new Constitution. In the engagements that ensued, the PWDs called for consideration of their plight to integrate them into society. That includes access to facilities such as braille machines to read written materials, prosthetic legs for amputees, wheelchairs, medicinal sun-cream for persons with albinism.
PWDS have emphatically called for the creation of a full-fledged government ministry, as well as an independent commission responsible for the protection and promotion of their well-being.

On Tuesday 18th June 2019, the CRC convened a consultative meeting with The Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD) and the Disabled Persons’ Organizations (DPO) as a sequel to the Commission’s stakeholders outreach engagements. The convergence which aimed at hearing first-hand the PWDS as a body was held at The Gambia Organisation of Visually-Impaired (GOVI) in Kanifing.

Speaking on behalf of the Commission, the Vice Chairperson, and Mrs. Hawa Sisay-Sabally explained the significance of the meeting, noting that it is in exercise of the CRC’s participatory and inclusiveness efforts in building a new and durable Constitution. She emphasized that the meeting was necessitated to hear first-hand submissions while their position paper was yet to be looked into.

**CRC CHAIRPERSON PRAISES PARTICIPATION OF GAMBIANS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL BUILDING**

The Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow has commended the Gambian people for actively participating in the CRC’s public consultations. “The CRC would like to register its appreciation to all Gambians who participated in the public consultations for their invaluable contributions by expressing their support and adding value to the Constitutional Review Process,” Justice Jallow said at a news conference held at the Commission’s secretariat.

Jallow thanked all those individuals and institutions who submitted opinions and papers to the Commission and assured the public of CRC’s adherence to principles of impartiality and political neutrality.

The chairperson told journalists that the CRC’s work is guided by the core values of participation, inclusiveness, representation, transparency and ownership in order to produce a sound Constitution which will reflect the aspirations of all Gambians. Among the issues that surfaced during this public consultation, were citizenship, fundamental Rights and Freedom, Elections, Local Government structures and Empowerment, the Executive, the need to establish service commissions for Health, Education, Agriculture and the Environment, the Legislature, etc. He revealed that the CRC was able to tour the whole country and engaged 106 communities in a bid to get their opinions in the drafting of a new Constitution for The Gambia.
Secretary Jobe: 'Constitutional Review Commission is a Household Name in The Gambia'

review all audio-visual material and written material that are currently being recorded by the communications department and media partners for now and posterity," he remarked.

According to him, all these interventions have greatly helped to enhance the visibility and image of the CRC and have helped increase public awareness of the issues and subject matters.

He pointed out that the public outreach programmes included interactive radio talk-shows wherein citizens have the possibility to call in and participate in the dialogue, live streaming of the public consultations meetings, daily coverage of the CRC programmes on TV, radio and the print press, adding that the regular airing of radio spots by radio stations and permanent presence on various social media platforms have enhanced public awareness about the Commission.

The CRC Secretary said that with the good use of the media to communicate effectively with the public, significant value has been added to the constitutional building process.
Continuing, he argued that by assessing the conduct of the process and by providing media kits to journalists, the CRC has ensured that there is credible and factual reporting of the media.
"The communications department has produced numerous radio spots for popularizing the constitutional reform process and is communicating proactively in the online world of social media," Jobe said.

The Secretary of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), Mr. Omar Ousman Jobe said that the visibility and image of the CRC has been enhanced and that the CRC is established as a household name in the country.

Secretary Jobe indicated that, cognizant of the importance of mass media and its capacity to reach large groups of people, the CRC made deliberate efforts to develop efficient partnerships with media houses and journalists.

The face-to-face public consultations have been accurately and adequately covered thanks to the sustained efforts of the CRC communications team and the partnership arrangements put in place with the print and electronic media that have dedicated space and air time to the CRC outreach activities.
Guided by a well thought-out media strategy he said, the Communications Department worked relentlessly to enhance the visibility of the CRC by posting communication products geared towards publicising the progress of the public consultation process.
"It is thus imperative that the CRC takes stock of and
PICTORIAL: IN-COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS
In its quest to consult with and include every Gambian in the constitutional review and building process, The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) deemed it prudent to engage the services of prominent Gambian artiste to cascade down the messages of the commission to the grassroots. Different artists in various music genres were contracted in enlightening the masses on the mandate of the CRC.

The essence of such engagements is to increase the commission’s efforts in reaching out to every Gambian and create the unique opportunity for them to share their views and thoughts in the drafting of a new constitution.

The CRC has signed a number of contracts with Killer Ace (Team Gomsa Bopa), ST - Brikama Boyo, Bright Stars Entertainment, and Nyako Manjang. These young and talented CRC ambassadors were engaged in distinct ways ranging from musical caravan, stage performance, and production of songs.

In fact, the official theme song of the CRC was produced by the reputable Bright Stars Entertainment. The song explicitly communicated the Commission’s core principles of Participation, Transparency, Inclusiveness, and Ownership. The CRC anthem carved a niche for itself and finds its way into every community as the CRC engages the people in its nationwide public consultation.

Under the campaign banner ‘Get Involved’, the CRC partnered with prominent hip-hop artiste, Killer Ace and his ‘Team Gom Sa Bopa’ crew. The partnership saw the team conduct series of musical caravans and shows, as well as an open campaign with a view to filter the commission’s messages to every nook and cranny of the urban community.

For ST – Brikama Boyo, another top Gambian Artiste, CRC supported his New Year’s Eve event which availed CRC the unique chance to spread its messages to hundreds of young people at the Brikama Mini Stadium.

To further penetrate the grassroots, the CRC also contracted Nyako Manjang, a prominent traditional communicator. She performed and handed down the Commission’s messages to the people in social functions. This approach was effective and productive with huge impact on the level of participation.

Consequently, the strategic engagement with the Gambian arts industry has enormously helped add value to the commission’s visibility and publicity undertakings. So far, the CRC through its Media and Communication Department, has succeeded in this stride by involving and consulting with Gambians, especially the youth in the review process. This is justifiable by the overwhelming submission of views and aspirations of Gambians home and abroad to the commission.
The CRC Head of HR and Administration Mr. Raymond Sarr on Friday June 28, 2019 addressed Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) fellows at a Town Hall meeting held at The Gambia College premises in Brikama.

The town hall meeting was part of YALI’s efforts to sensitise youths on how to enhance democratisation and good governance through leadership with a specific focus on the Constitution.

Speaking to the young people, Mr Raymond Sarr who spoke on behalf of the CRC chairman said the work of the CRC is in line with the Gambia’s National Development Plan (2018 – 2022) strategic priority area geared towards National Unity, Good Governance and Democracy.

He told YALI fellows that the CRC has adopted a multi-pronged approach towards gathering opinions in order to aid meaningful dialogue on Constitutional reform process and guide the drafting of a new Constitution.

He informed participants that the CRC is independent and does not represent any particular interest group. He further assured that the Commission’s work is guided by the core values of Participation, Inclusiveness, Representation, Transparency and National Ownership in order to produce a sound Constitution which reflects the collective values and aspirations of all Gambians and our stakeholders.

Mr. Sarr also emphasised that the CRC has and is still reviewing progressive model Constitutions of countries across Africa, adding that the CRC continues to engage in meaningful consultative meetings and dialogues with key stakeholder institutions.

The CRC has been very meticulous and has deliberately ensured that all classes of people participate in the ongoing Constitution Review Process, he stated.

The CRC constructed a ramp at its Secretariat office for ease of access for people with disabilities. The CRC also employed the services of a sign language expert and translated some of its working documents into braille for the benefit and use of people who are visually impaired, Sarr disclosed.

“The CRC developed the “Issues Document” to identify and raise important issues to draw the attention of Gambians and other stakeholders as a mechanism to initiate and gauge public opinion on those issues,” he said.
The Constitutional Review Commission, as part of its stakeholder consultations, hosted the officials from the Office of Ombudsman at its secretariat on Monday 20th May, 2019.

The purpose of the visit was primarily to hold face-to-face consultations on issues surrounding the role, scope and functions of the Office of the Ombudsman. The CRC, in its pursuit of inclusiveness provided an enabling environment to all sectors of government to freely express their opinions held consultations to have a better understanding of the operations and statutory responsibilities of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The discussions were also intended to add value to the drafting of the Constitution.

The Ombudsman, Mrs. Fatou Bin Njie-Jallow, said according to the Ombudsman’s Act 1997, the office was established with the aim of ensuring good governance, rule of law and the protection of human rights.

The Ombudsman cited section 223 of the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia which stipulates the code of conduct for public officials and also the declaration of assets to the Ombudsman. She informed the CRC that it was for that reason that the President of the Republic of the Gambia requested all government ministers to declare their assets to the Ombudsman.

She stated that the Office of the Ombudsman receives about 120 complaints annually. Similar reports have stemmed from both the public and private sectors despite its mandate to receive complaints from the public sector only. For this reason, the Office of the Ombudsman deemed it necessary to handle cases emanating from the private sector even if the office does not have the jurisdiction to handle such matters. Making reference to the National Development Plan, she noted that the Office of the Ombudsman is at liberty to widen its jurisdiction to handle cases emanating from the private sector. Statistics have shown that from 2017 to this year (2019), the number of cases the Office of the Ombudsman received has increased to about 400 cases.

The Office of the Ombudsman also received cases of human rights abuses from officers and mediation sessions are usually conducted to resolve them amicably. However, in
most cases the office was deterred from acting on human rights violations under the second Republic. She stated that the President has been the principal violator of human rights and as such, the Office was instructed to restrict its activities to the core mandate of the institution.

Since the powers of the office of the Ombudsman is only mentioned in the Ombudsman’s Act instead of the Constitution, she therefore suggested that those powers be mentioned in the new Constitution so that they can carry out their functions effectively. She further said security of tenure is also needed for the Office of the Ombudsman to be able to assert its independence. For that to be actualized, it is necessary to clearly stipulate the powers and functions of the office of the Ombudsman in the Constitution instead of just having it in an Act of Parliament.

Asked whether the setting up of the National Human Rights Commission will not take away some of the functions of the Office of the Ombudsman, Mrs. Njie-Jallow said there is no harm in having institutions with similar functions as the Office of the Ombudsman, but the powers and functions of these institutions need to be clearly defined in the Constitution in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
The Premiere Counselor of the German Embassy in Dakar, Thomas Wixler, met CRC officials at the CRC headquarters. The visit, according to him, was aimed at getting information about the CRC process and its procedures also in order to map out possibilities to offer support to the review process.

He informed the Secretary and heads of departments that the German Government is interested in the constitutional review process.

The CRC Secretary, Omar Ousman Jobe, informed him about the Commission’s mandate of reviewing the 1997 Constitution and drafting a new one. He said the CRC is guided by core principles and added that it is committed to drafting a constitution that will reflect the views and aspirations of Gambians.
Officials from the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) in the US visited the CRC Secretariat. A member of the delegation, Bread Smith, said the HDP is a twenty-member commission of the U.S. House of Representatives that works directly with partner countries to support the development of effective, independent, and responsive legislative institutions. ‘Our purpose is to help the infrastructure of democracy,’ he said, adding that the visit was aimed at discussing possible areas of support and collaboration.

The CRC Secretary, Omar Ousman Jobe, highlighted the various means employed by the CRC to ensure that the constitutional review process is participatory and inclusive. He said the CRC is committed to drafting a constitution that reflects the views and aspirations of Gambians. Established by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2005, HDP uses peer-to-peer exchange programs, training seminars for members and staff and targeted material assistance to build capacity in key areas such as legislative oversight, budget analysis, committee operations, constituent relations, and library and research services. Its singular focus on the legislative branch of government and its unique ability to bring together American legislators and their peers from around the world have made the commission a valuable forum for strengthening democratic institutions and deepening bilateral relations.
CRC DIALOGUES WITH GAMBIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Commission. These strategies include both national and external consultations, online survey, household survey, social media platforms and stakeholder meetings.

According to Chairman Jallow, the Commission believes in the core values of public participation, inclusiveness, transparency and ownership which are essential in the building of the new Constitution. He also urged Gambians to share their thoughts, especially on issues that aren’t contained in the ‘Issues Document’.

He called on Gambians to participate and support the CRC’s work so as to capture the views and aspirations of the people of The Gambia.

The dialogue was attended by all registered political parties in The Gambia such as UDP, PPP, PDOIS, GMC, APRC, GAP, NCP, NRP, GDC and GPDP. Among them were party leaders and party militants who participated by sharing their thoughts and further hailed the CRC’s efforts in creating such a forum to dialogue with them.

The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has conducted consultative sessions with Gambian Political Parties with a view to soliciting their perspectives on the new Constitution.

The dialogue was held at Ocean Bay Hotel and NaNA Conference Hall on 11th and 18th May, 2019.

Speaking at the meeting, the Chairman of the Commission Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow said the motive of the meeting was to engage the different political parties in the reviewing of the 1997 Constitution.

He informed participants that the CRC has developed several strategies geared toward enabling citizens to give their suggestions and opinions to the
ABOUT THE CRC

The Commission
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) is established by an Act of the National Assembly in June, 2018. The Commission’s main functions are to review and analyze the current Constitution, draft a new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia and prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. The Commission’s report will outline the processes engaged in reviewing and drafting the new Constitution and provide the rationale for the provisions contained in the new Constitution. The Members of the CRC were appointed on the 1st June, 2018 and they were sworn into office by the President on the 4th June, 2018.

The Commissioners
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) comprises 11 Members made up of a Chairperson designated by the Chief Justice, Vice Chairperson nominated by the Minister of Justice and 9 other Members nominated by the President. All of them were appointed by the President.

Our Mandate
The main functions of the CRC are to review and analyze the current Constitution, draft a new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia and prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. The report will outline the processes engaged in reviewing and drafting the new Constitution and provide the rationale for the provisions contained in the new Constitution.

Our Core Values
The CRC is an independent body. Pursuant to the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017, the CRC, in carrying out its work, is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority. As an institution, it is guided by the following core values:

- Inclusiveness
- Independence
- Integrity
- Participation

Our Guiding Principles
In carrying out its work, the CRC is required by the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017, to have regard to national values and ethos and safeguard and promote the following:

- The existence of The Gambia as a sovereign independent State;
- The Gambia’s Republican systems of governance, including democratic values and respect for and promotion of the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms;
- The separation of powers;
- National unity, cohesion and peace;
- The importance of ensuring periodic democratic elections based on universal adult suffrage, including the introduction of term limits for serving in the office of President; and
- The Gambia’s continued existence as a secular State.

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