

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the
World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international
level**

Statement by

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ON BEHALF OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL ECONOMY OF THE GAMBIA, (OUSMAN A BAH) I feel honoured and indeed privileged to deliver this speech in this august gathering today.

Excellencies, Chairperson, distinguish participants, and all other protocol duly and respectfully observed.

First and foremost, I also wish to extend the Honourable Minister Ousman A Bah's warm regards and congratulatory messages to the CSTD for organising and successfully hosting this significant gathering.

Chairperson and distinguish participants

The Gambia government has placed a high priority on the development of science and technology, investing in initiatives that produce tangible results. These investments are channelled through the Ministry of higher education research, science, technology and innovation, and the ministry of communications and digital economy, in the form of policies, strategies, infrastructure, and institutional strengthening.

On the policy front, the Science, Technology, and Innovation policy 2013-2022 and the ICT4D policy statement 2018-2028 reflects the government's unwavering commitment to development driven by technology advancements and impactful innovations.

The GOTG continues to invest in result driven science and technology initiatives in collaboration with its development partners. The Gambia's prominent role in the implementation of the World Bank funded African Centres of Excellence (ACE) program, which focuses on enhancing human capital in STEM, is a clear indication of government's commitment to advancing science and technology.

The roll out of the ACE submarine Cable in 2012 and the deployment of the national fibre backbone helped strengthen the infrastructural foundations to advance science, technology and digital transformation in the Gambia.

By creating a stand-alone Ministry responsible for accelerating the digital transformation process, the government has shown foresight and a commitment to leveraging digital technologies to transform lives and reap digital dividends in the Gambia.

Chairperson, distinguish ladies and gentlemen

Furthermore, the government has plans to create technology hubs across all regions in The Gambia to spur research, development and ensure an economy that thrives on technology and innovation. The establishment of the tech hubs will be informed by the conclusions of a feasibility study done in 2022 by the consultancy arm of the University of The Gambia.

Giving its strategic position in the region, the Gambian government is also prioritizing infrastructure development initiatives that provide a solid foundation for rapid digitalization and attract foreign direct investment.

The establishment of the new University of Science, Engineering, and Technology in 2022 with support from the World Bank and other partners is in line with government's commitment to producing top notch locally trained professionals in STEM. This is also in line with strides geared towards creating more employment and employability opportunities for the Gambia's mainly youthful population.

It will also ensure an inclusive digital economy in the medium and long term.

Importantly, in line with strides aimed at ensuring inclusiveness, government also continues to prioritise the roll out of targeted trainings for women, girls, and persons with disabilities on digital technologies. The strengthening of their digital skills will give them much needed impetus to fully participate and thrive in the fourth industrial revolution.

The tech hubs will also help enable the transformation of rural economies and development of critical sectors in those areas like education, health and agriculture. The mainstreaming of digital technologies in these areas will help boost productiveness and help address legacy issues including access to markets for farmers.

Finally, given its strategic positioning in the region, The Gambia government is prioritizing digital infrastructural development initiatives that would provide the solid foundation for rapid digitalization and also serve as a major seductive attractor of foreign direct investment.

The establishment of a Secondary Submarine Cable, the roll out of an Integrated National Payment Gateway and the deployment of a tier 4 National Data Centre are all initiatives that have the potentials to significantly accelerate the Gambia's digital transformation.

We therefore believe that with this increased focus and requisite support from our development partners, the Gambia will achieve its science and technology advancement objectives.

Chairperson, distinguished participants, I thank you for your attention.