

**Keynote address on the occasion of the
opening of the PACF meeting held at the
Golden Beach Hotel in Banjul**

By

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Madame chairperson (and my sister, Ms. Fatou Janha), distinguished delegates from the participating countries, the honorable Vice Chancellor of the university of the Gambia, Professor Muhammad M. Kah, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, all protocols duly and respectfully observed.

I am deeply honored by your invitation to join you today to deliver the keynote address on this important meeting of the Pan African Competitiveness forum (PACF).

Ladies and gentlemen, I am informed that PACF was launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2008 as a Continent-wide Competence and Action Center for innovation and cluster based competitiveness approach to national and regional economic development. Incidentally, 2008 was the year I was appointed Chairman of The Gambia Competition Commission and in the same year the formative processes of setting up the GCC were begun. Thus the GCC and PACF share the same birth year. But the joint occurrence of these happenings is not in my mind, a random development:

- 1. The year 2008 marks the beginnings of what has come to be recognized as the global financial crises with its devastating effects of financial systems and national economies of the major industrialized countries. In the continuing search for solutions a rethinking of globalization strategy has been forced on all nations of the world.**

2. Because of this rethinking, consensus is rapidly building for a deliberate move away from unrestrained globalization wherein, might is right, in favor of globalization with appropriate checks and balances. There is general even if not yet universal agreement that the necessary checks and balances are best provided through the development of a regime of competition policies and laws which when applied across national, regional and international boundaries, stand a better chance of ushering in the improvements in living standards for all.

It is heartening that Africa and Africans are refusing to be left behind and are taking initiatives in the right direction by taking competition issues seriously and seeking create a new culture of global competition within which our producers can have a reasonable chance of realizing benefits.

But recalling the old adage, that charity begins at home, I am inclined to think that prudence would seem to suggest that we focus our energies and attention on the home ground first. Africa is last frontier; it has a vast potential market and it also has a vast resources potential. We must improve exchange within our regions and continent first and then use that strength as a spring board, to compete in the global markets.

Ladies and gentlemen, the government of The Gambia views Competition regulation as an important facet of the

economy. The objective of the Gambia Competition Commission is primarily to establish conditions of free and effective competition in the economy, to ensure that, anti-competitive practices do not create barriers to trade or other forms of protectionism.

The Gambia Competition Commission is a statutory body established to administer the Competition Act of 2007. The Act has generally two principal aims:-

- 1. To prevent anti-competitive conduct thereby encouraging competition and efficiency in business, resulting in greater choice for consumers in price, quality and service; and**
- 2. To ensure that the interests and welfare of consumers are adequately protected in their dealings with producers and sellers of goods and services.**

Competition at its simplest is rivalry between businesses. This rivalry is supposed to engender in businesses optimal allocation of resources and optimal pricing to reflect market forces. This is expected to lead to better quality, a wider choice of goods and services and at lower prices. This means that consumers are able to purchase goods and services as cheaply as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are confronted with a marketplace with no borders. As a result of the globalization of markets and the lightning-speed advances in technology,

that I have cited earlier, the world has become one giant marketplace, where borders have all but been eliminated or replaced by virtual ones. This is why this forum is important. It provides a platform to mobilize and harness experiences from different countries with a view to become globally competitive. We must be efficient and innovative if we are to remain competitive. We must improve competition space within our countries and regions first else, the globalized market will continue to play one against the other resulting in none of us wining.

I urge you to use this forum effectively to network and collaborate.

Ladies and gentlemen, The Global Competition Forum lists five (5) factors that are essential to achieving regional and international competitiveness:

- 1. Infrastructure.**
- 2. Marketing**
- 3. Political environment**
- 4. Research/ Innovation**
- 5. Skills**

How well we respond to the challenges posed by these factors will determine how competitive we shall become both regionally and globally. For the PACF, the strategies they in putting in place to address them will, to a large extent, determine our success or failure.

Ladies and gentlemen, I see from the Programme that you have a rich agenda ahead of you. I urge you share experiences; cherish your successes and learn from your setbacks and mistakes.

**But never give up because the going has become tough.
Remember**

“Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes away from the objective”

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen I wish you a very fruitful forum. May Allah Bless and Guide your deliberations