

# NEWS: Gambia gets EUR10m for governance tech support

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*BANJUL, Gambia, 6 February 2012/ The Point:* The European Union and the Gambia government on Friday 3 February signed a €10 million (ten million euro equivalent to D400 million) agreement to support improving democratic and economic governance in The Gambia.

The agreement, signed at the conference room of the ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in Banjul by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry of Finance and European Union Charge d'Affaires, seeks to improve access to justice and legal education, the capacities of media professionals, as well as economic governance by improving expenditure and financial accountability.

Falling within the financial envelope of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the agreement addresses a key EU priority seeking to support governments to manage their institutions and resources to benefit all citizens in an even, transparent and accountable way.

"The key aspect of the governance programme in The Gambia is to provide technical assistance to strengthen government institutions, in order for them to be able to provide the services that Gambian citizens expect and deserve," Ms Agnes Guillaud, Charge d'Affaires of the EU Delegation to The Gambia said at the signing ceremony.

The European Union, she said, is guided by important principles such as democracy, the rule of law, the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for human dignity, which have inspired its own creation to contribute to peace and stability.

"The EU relationship with the ACP countries is defined by the Cotonou Agreement which favours a relationship in which mutual respect and political dialogue underpin a genuine and effective partnership aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals," she stated.

Noting that the EU remains by far the biggest multilateral donor in The Gambia, and that its contribution has increased over the years, Ms Guillaud said the aim of the EU's external assistance is to reinforce ownership of partners to tackle development challenges.

"For our support to be sustainable in the long run, the Gambia government needs to take responsibility for constructive dialogue with the Gambian people, for the success of development activities, the delivery of essential services and respect for human rights," she added.

Mod A. Secka, permanent secretary at the ministry of Finance, said the support from the European Union clearly demonstrated the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the Gambia and the EU.

"The three components of the programme: access to justice and legal education; freedom of the press and quality of information available for the people; as well as public expenditure and financial accountability are empirical evidence strongly linking good governance to economic growth and improved welfare and social justice," Secka opined.

According to Secka, the programme to be implemented in over 60 months is not only guaranteeing citizen's rights and upholding of rule of law as enshrined in our constitution, but also to improve financial governance by strengthening public financial management reforms being embarked upon by the Gambian authorities.

By *Yusuf Ceesay/ The Point*

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