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ActionAid International The Gambia Decries Hate Speech Ahead of 2026 Elections!

Banjul, The Gambia - October 1st, 2026- Elections are an important part of democracy. They allow citizens to make their choices, hold leaders accountable and shape the direction of their country. But political competition should never come at the expense of our dignity, unity and relationships that hold our communities together.

As The Gambia enters another electoral cycle with the Presidential elections set to take place on 5th December 2026, we urge all Gambians to reject hate speech, tribal sentiments, incitements, misinformation and messages that seek to divide us. Politicians, political parties, women, young people, religious and traditional leaders, the media, civil society and every citizen as voters have a part to play in keeping our political discourse mature, respectful, accountable and responsible.

Word matters. A sloppy statement, inflammatory speech or divisive social media post can quickly create tension and deepen division. The same platform can, however, encourage understanding, tolerance, and constructive dialogue at all times.

The Gambia is known as the Smiling Coast of Africa because of the warmth, hospitality, and peaceful nature of its people despite all the odds. This is a heritage we should all be proud of and committed to preserve.

Political differences are a natural part of democracy. We may support different candidates, parties or ideas, but we remain one people, sharing the same country and hopes for its future. Our differences should allow us to engage, debate and learn from one another, not turn us against each other.

Political leaders both from the incumbent and the opposition have a particular responsibility to set the tone. They should lead by example, promote respectful political engagement and discourage language or conduct that could inflame tensions among the citizenry. We call on political leaders to take responsibility and condemn any act of hate speech and tribal incitement that emanates from their camp.

Young people, especially those active on social media, also have an important role. Let us use these platforms to share credible information and encourage constructive conversations based on policies and development programmes rather than insults, threats, hate speech or unverified claims. Before sharing a message, let's ask ourselves: Will this bring Gambians together or push us further apart?

ActionAid International The Gambia as a member of the civil society community remains committed to support civic engagement, community dialogues, youth participation, women's empowerment and initiatives that strengthen social cohesion for sustainable development.

These efforts are essential to creating spaces where people can engage with differences respectfully and work together for the common good. But the responsibility does not rest with the institutions alone. Religious and traditional leaders, the media, influencers, political actors, young people and

"The Power in People"

citizens all have a role in shaping the kind of electoral environment we want to see. Most importantly, we call on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to ensure fair play to all political parties in accordance with the electoral law of the Gambia.

The spirit of **"One Gambia, One People"** must remain alive throughout the electoral cycle. Whatever our political choices, we remain Gambians first before anything else. Let's disagree on policies and programmes planned for the citizens without becoming enemies, debate without dehumanizing one another, and campaign without losing sight of what binds us together.

Election should strengthen our nascent democracy, not weaken our relationships. Our differences should enrich our national conversation based on policies and programmes, not divide our nation. Let's protect what unites us and reject any attempt by any political party to divide us so that the peace and stability of this young democracy is sustained!

Elections and Political Leaders Come and Go, The Gambia Remains!

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