

### **3<sup>rd</sup> NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP MEETING HELD IN THE GAMBIA**

April 8, 2010, Banjul, The GAMBIA

“Convinced that the private sector requires the ‘right enabling’ environment and a conducive ‘investment climate’ to thrive, The Gambia government, through the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment, seeks to implement a healthy competition culture that is appropriate to our needs and situation”

This was said by the Hon. Abdou Kolley, Minister of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment while officially opening the 3rd National Reference Group (NRG-III) meeting on the 8th of April 2010 at Kairaba Hotel, The Gambia.

The Minister also pointed out that his Ministry will always be supportive of all outreach activities geared towards enhancing competition and consumer welfare outcomes, and will be eagerly awaiting the results of the deliberations, for which any initiative to engage with stakeholders around it will be welcome.

The NRG meeting was the 3rd meeting under the project “Strengthening Constituencies for Effective Competition Regimes in Select West African Countries”, dubbed the 7up4 project, which is being implemented by CUTS International in seven countries namely Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. In The Gambia, the project is being implemented in partnership with the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG), a local NGO.

Members of the NRG are stakeholders drawn from business, civil society, sector regulators and government departments. The purpose of the meeting was to map out strategies for addressing the various challenges on effective implementation of competition law in The Gambia that were unearthed during the two year project. Members came up with a roadmap, outlining specific action points as well as institutions responsible for driving the issues forward. These also include initiatives aimed at dialogue with important stakeholders, such as members of the National Assembly, who have a critical role in sustaining the agenda.

It was also agreed that the NRG membership and meetings should continue after the project, and strategies were also discussed on how this can be sustained. The deliberations were very fruitful, and there was hope that the establishment of a competition culture in The Gambia was a very likely scenario, which was also acknowledged by the Chairman of the newly established Gambia Competition Commission.