

## **Government committed to private-sector led growth in The Gambia**

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“The Gambia is privileged to be a beneficiary of the project that aims at strengthening constituencies for effective competition regimes in selected African countries”, observed Hon’ble Abdou Colley, the Secretary of State (SoS) for Trade, Industry and Employment. He was speaking at the first meeting of the national stakeholders in The Gambia to discuss the state of competition regime in the country. He reassured the participants that the Gambian government is committed to economic policies aiming at promoting private sector-led growth and development as stated out in the Vision 2020 blue print and the country’s PRSP.

The meeting was organised by the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG) as a part of the regional competition policy project that the organisation was implementing in collaboration with CUTS International, India. The event brought together key stakeholders from various interests groups.

The SoS emphasised on the necessity for the government to reduce poverty and provides an enabling environment for a private sector led-growth. He noted that competition policy and law is no doubt a critical component of such a policy package. "Competition policy is a relatively new area for most countries in the sub-region, The Gambia being no exception”, he observed. Keeping in view the importance of a competition policy in overall economic management, The Gambia, with assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat, formulated a competition policy and subsequently a Competition Act, in 2007.

Hon’ble Colley informed the NRG members that his Ministry was in the process of establishing the Gambia Competition Commission (GCC), and that he is confident that when this commission is set up, it will provide the Gambian business community and citizens a place to channel their complaints regarding unfair and anti-competitive business practices.

Mr Matarr Drammeh, President of the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), expressed his support to the 7UP4 project, and noted that the Chamber of Commerce was delighted to be associated with such a project and stressed the fact that free and fair market competition is of paramount importance to the business community in The Gambia. He also insisted that competition needs regulation otherwise excess competition may lead to undesirable outcomes.

The meeting continued with the presentation of the project overview and expected roles on NRG members by the project adviser and representative of CUTS, Mr. Lahcen Achy.

The presentation by Omar Jobe, core researcher for Pro-PAG shared the main findings of a preliminary country paper depicting the state of competition in The Gambia, with the participants. The debate over the report was very rich and benefited strongly from the expertise of the audience. The meeting was graced by the presence of the members of the electronic and print media.