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STATEMENT
BY
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PRESIDENT
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
AT THE
NELSON MANDELA PEACE SUMMIT
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

It is with much esteem that I wish to pay tribute to Madiba Nelson Mandela on the centenary of his birth, and to underscore the importance of this Peace Summit organized to recognize and honor the enduring legacy of that very special world citizen - a man of peace and compassion; yet, a strong defender of social justice and equality. The whole world has noted with admiration that, in spite of the unique situation in his homeland, his lifelong struggle was not solely about liberating South Africa from injustice and oppression; rather, it was about making the entire world a better place for all. This made Nelson Mandela a noble, global citizenship with a global vision for humankind.

As we devote this Peace Summit to celebrating the centenary of his birth, I submit that we reflect on some of the lessons from his life for the betterment of our world.

Today, racism, dislike of foreigners, modern-day slavery and intolerance are as rife across the world as never before. It is a paradox that the evils that Madela struggled against decades ago still persist and, in fact, pose a threat to his dream of a better world. It is wise and fitting, therefore, that world leaders draw from his wisdom, strength and resolve to stamp out these vices and transform the world into a safer and better place for all.

When Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the truth, national reconciliation and healing in post-Apartheid South Africa, he was actually living what he believed in. Mandela believed in dialogue and reconciliation as necessary elements for brokering, promoting and maintaining peace.

This makes it necessary for all leaders to draw inspiration from his statesmanship to be genuine in word and in deed, and to work closely towards stopping all conflicts from developing and raging on. This is particularly relevant to Africa, where conflicts continue to erupt unreasonably. The world at large and Africa, in particular, do not only have a distinguished statesman to emulate in Madiba, but also a mission to fulfil. Mandela left behind the unfinished mission of attaining global peace and progress.

Mr. President,

As his strategy, Nelson Mandela devoted his life to preventive diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and intervened at critical moments to end conflicts and discord across Africa and beyond.

He won many hearts by continuing this mediatory role as an elder statesman, even after he left office as President. In this light, I call on the United Nations, the African Union and all regional organizations to promote and invest in preventive diplomacy and participate actively in mediation efforts and conflict resolution.

Mandela's exemplary leadership qualities will remain a source of inspiration for posterity. His enduring legacy is his struggle to make this world a better place for all. Let us honor this legacy today with the pledge that: "As we leave these hallowed halls, we will rededicate our lives to making the world a better place for all."

I now end with a timeless quotation from a landmark statement by Mandela to the United Nations General Assembly in 1994. He said: "*The millions across our globe who stand expectant at the gates of hope look to this organization to bring them peace, to bring them life, to bring them a life worth living.*"

I thank you.