



**Foreword by
The Rt Hon Lord Hurd
of Westwell CH CBE PC
Chairman, FIRST
Advisory Council**

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this special report on The Gambia. The United Kingdom's ties to The Gambia date back more than a century, with the country becoming a British protectorate in 1894. After World War II, during which Gambian troops made a valuable contribution to the Allied effort, the country began a peaceful and democratic process toward independence. After elections in 1962, The Gambia became independent in 1965, joining the Commonwealth, and then becoming a republic after a referendum in 1970.

Our two countries enjoy a close and comprehensive relationship based on mutual respect between two sovereign nations, and the UK supports the Gambia's commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Within the context of the Commonwealth and the United Nations we cooperate on peacekeeping, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and regional security. We have shared goals in working for the political and economic development of both The Gambia and Africa. Links between our two countries have been further strengthened in recent years by the growing number of British tourists who holiday there. I know from my own family how British citizens have enjoyed themselves in The Gambia.

The Gambia has taken great strides in moving its economy forward under President Jammeh, with annual average growth of around 5 percent over the last

five years. President Jammeh is committed to transforming The Gambia into a trading, export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, based on free-market policies and the private sector, underpinned by a well-educated population.

Under its Vision 20-20 policy document, The Gambia is moving forward in its goal of becoming a middle-income country. With the support of development partners, among them the United Kingdom, the government has launched initiatives to promote the private sector, such as the Growth and Competitiveness Project (GCP) to support foreign trade and investment, and the Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP) to improve agricultural productivity. GNAIP could be the first step towards broad-based agricultural development, provided that it is complemented by land reform and infrastructure provision.

The government of President Jammeh is keen to attract continued overseas involvement in the economy, and has introduced legislation to facilitate foreign direct investment. The priority areas are agriculture, fisheries and forestry, tourism, and light manufacturing. The banking sector is developing, driven by FDI. Increased competition and capacity in the industry has increased deposits and credit supply.

The UK has had a long and fruitful relationship with The Gambia, and I look forward to seeing ever-closer co-operation in the future. **E**