

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

5 Fitzgerald Street, PMB 48, Banjul, THE GAMBIA

Tel: (220) 4224867, 4224869, 4228056

Fax: (220) 4229701

Email: nea@gamtel.gn



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The Chief Executive Officer
The Global Environment Facility
Washington D.C.

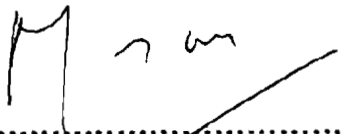
Subject: Endorsement Letter for the Reduction of Environmental Impact from Coastal Tourism through Introduction of Policy Changes and Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships Project

Blessed with a coastline of immense natural beauty and accessibility for the general population, the tourism industry in The Gambia contributes to over 18% of the country's Gross Domestic Product, and is also the largest foreign exchange earner by all comparisons with other sectors of the economy, employing an estimated number of 10,000 people, directly and indirectly.

Nonetheless, this project is being developed at a time when the negative effects of mass tourism on our coastal and marine environment are beginning to cause concern. In The Gambia, little attention has been paid in the past to the positioning of tourism developments with respect to their proximity to sensitive biological areas, resulting in the damage, removal or complete loss of critical habitats such as mangroves and wetlands. Sea erosion is being exacerbated both by tourism development itself, and by other uses such as illegal sand mining to provide building materials for use in construction. Inadequate procedures and infrastructure for sewage treatment and disposal, excessive production of solid waste coupled with poor solid waste management and lack of capacity to design and manage effective waste management systems, uncontrolled water use, excessive reliance on non-renewable energy resources are adding to the list of emerging problems for the industry. This regional project is considered to be of great national priority, as it seeks to address the negative impacts the tourism industry is or could imminently have on the marine and coastal environment.

On behalf of the Government of The Gambia, and in my capacity as the GEF Operational Focal Point for The Gambia, I wish to strongly endorse The Gambia's participation in the implementation of the **Reduction of Environmental Impact from Coastal Tourism through Introduction of Policy Changes and Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships Project**. It should be noted that the project has received the full endorsement of the National GEF Committee, which is mandated to review and approve all GEF projects before the GEF Operational Focal Point forwards them to the Secretariat.

We look forward to working with the GEF Secretariat and the IAs for the successful implementation of this important regional GEF project.



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Momodou B. Sarr
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR THE GAMBIA

cc: **The Permanent Secretary**
Dept. of State for Forestry
& Environment
State House
Banjul

The Permanent Secretary
Dept. of State for Tourism & Culture
The Quadrangle
Banjul

The Resident Coordinator

The Resident Coordinator, UN Systems