

The Office of National Security (ONS) Validates its Communication Strategy

The ONS has validated a much awaited Communication Strategy which was in the making for several months. The development of the strategy was supported by the UNDP through the deployment of a Communication Expert to the ONS late last year. The validation ceremony was attended by representatives from all security institutions in the country, Government Ministries and Non Governmental Organizations.

In her keynote address, the UN Resident Representative, Mandisa Mashologu, noted how international cooperation can support national efforts in addressing complex security challenges and how such collaboration can be harnessed to build a foundation for lasting and sustainable peace.

She underscored the importance of timely, accurate and proper information to stakeholders especially to Rights Organizations to help them make informed decision for their constituents. Madame Mashologu also stressed the need to reach out to all stakeholders especially those in the regions.

“It is very very important that we make sure that this is not a Banjul Strategy. The importance of making sure that consultations, engagement, communication flows to the respective regions is embedded within the local governance structures that we have, through institutions, and the fantastic role that civil society can play is paramount.”

The Deputy National Security Adviser, Colonel Omar B Bojang, thanked the UNDP for its continuous support to The Gambia’s Security Sector Reform process. He also thanked all stakeholders for their inputs to the Communication Strategy which he said is vital in reaching out to the public and sensitizing them on the ongoing reform efforts, most especially some of the success stories. Notable amongst these is a reformed security sector, which he says “now adheres to democratic practices that upholds the principles of good governance in line with international conventions, treaties and best practice.”

As part of efforts taking security to the doorsteps of Gambians, Colonel Bojang also announced plans to fully equip and render operational regional Security Offices by the end of June, 2024.

The development of a robust communication strategy marks a milestone in the ongoing Security Sector Reform(SSR) process, as it sets out a road map for effective engagement, communication, coordination, collaboration, and partnership with stakeholders. The scope of the ongoing SSR process undertaken by The Gambia Government was informed by the recommendations of an Assessment Report by the Security Sector Technical Working Group in 2017. Much of the gains registered so far from that time have largely been under-reported mainly due to the absence of an effective communication strategy. The validation of the ONS Communication Strategy

while a vital and welcomed development, is also one of the first completed activities of the Security Sector Reform Strategy (2020-2024). It will undoubtedly be key in effective information sharing, , public outreach and sensitization to ensure ownership and buy-in into the ongoing reform process.