

***Banjul, Gambia, September 22 (Infosplusgabon) - Gambian President Adama Barrow, has said that that country's economic growth has generally strengthened, while inflation has now moderated, revealing that for the past two years the economy grew by 4.8% in 2017 and improved to 6.5% in 2018.***

He made the statement on Thursday at the official opening of the 2019 legislative year. He said balance of payments (BoP) estimates indicate that the current account deficit narrowed to 1.5 percent of GDP in the first half of 2019 compared to a deficit of 1.7 percent of GDP in the corresponding quarter in 2018. He said the improvement in the current account balance is attributed to the increase in foreign inflows related to the support from development partners, diaspora remittances, and tourism.

According to him, gross international reserves are projected at 4 months of next year's imports of goods and services. President Barrow said the exchange rate of the dalasi remains broadly stable supported by market confidence, and increased inflows from private remittances, higher receipts from tourism, and official inflows from development partners.

"Government's fiscal operations for the first six months of 2019 indicated that total revenue and grants stood at 9.8 percent of GDP compared to 8.6 percent of GDP in the same period last year. Total expenditure and net lending declined from 11.5 percent of GDP a year ago to 10 percent of GDP in the first part of 2019," he told lawmakers at the National Assembly in Banjul.

He added: "According to the financial soundness indicators, the banking sector remains adequately capitalized, highly liquid and profitable. The ratio of non-performing loans to gross loans declined to 2.3 percent from 2.7 percent a year ago, largely reflecting enhanced credit administration processes and effective loan recovery measures." President Barrow further revealed that private sector credit expanded by 28.8 percent, higher than 20 percent a year ago.

"With the private sector expected to play a significant role in financing of the National Development Plan (2018-2021), we have drafted a revision to the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Law with the support of Expertise France and other International Financial Institutions. As a result, we will submit the bill to the National Assembly for consideration,"he said.

He pointed out that in the context of the ongoing State Owned Enterprises (SOE) reforms, government is revising the SOE law which is also planned for submission to the National Assembly before the end of the year. "Already, reforms have been initiated within the sector and are progressing very well. Because of the need to review our tax regime the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs will present to this body a taxation Bill, among others for ratification," he said.

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