

EXCERPTS:

**WELCOME SPEECH BY MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS SHERIFF ML GOMEZ AT
THE OPENING OF THE AFRICAN SOFTBALL FORUM**

April 16, 2009 in Gambia

“Softball, like all other National Associations, has a very important role to play in this drive. Its introduction will indeed create an opportunity for Gambians to have multiple disciplines of sports to choose from.

“Since this is a new sport in The Gambia, we must endeavor to have the right governance and infrastructure whose strategic aim is for sustainable development in the short, medium, and long term. It is imperative therefore to establish softball clubs and have an executive committee that is vibrant and focused to the development and promotion of the game in The Gambia.

“I have no doubt that given the inspiration and people behind the introduction of softball, this association and game will not only compete for wider recognition but will also quickly take its right place as a big and popular sport in The Gambia.

“My Ministry is committed to and will continue to support the promotion and development of a conducive atmosphere for softball in particular and sport in general.

“As the Minister responsible for sports, it is encouraging to note that the International Softball Federation is already embarking on a strategy to get softball reinstated into the Olympic programme in 2016, and plans have been launched to ensure independence for all national softball federations around the world. I am sure that this Forum for Africa could help in fostering stronger ties between the International Softball Federation and Africa and The Gambia in particular, thus resulting in broadening the African base for the game of softball.

“Let me therefore commend the International Softball Federation for the vision and purpose to develop and expand softball. My encouragement also goes to you in your endeavors to get softball back to the Olympic Games.

“I will not conclude without applauding the bravery and commitment of Ms. Beatrice Allen, our IOC Member and the chief architect behind the introduction of softball in The Gambia, and her entire committee. I have no doubt that as this is history in the making, Madam you and your team will be the immortals of softball in The Gambia.”



ISF President Don Porter and Sheriff ML Gomez