

August 07, 2026

A Tribute to Dr. Karamo NM Sonko

Jula Consultancy FZE and Affiliated Organisations Announce the Passing of Founder Dr. Karamo N.M. Sonko and the Appointment of Ms. Mariama Sonko to Lead the Organisations

[Jula Consultancy FZE](#), [Sahara Gold Corporation](#), [Heeno International \(HI\)](#), [Sables Sustainable Mining Consultancy LLC](#), [The Strategic Management Sustainability Tool \(SMST\)](#) and [The Gambia Special Needs Entrepreneurial Fund \(GSNEF\)](#) (collectively, the "Organisations") announce with profound sadness the passing of their Founder, President, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Managing Director (MD) and Executive Chairman, Dr. Karamo N.M. Sonko. The organisations also announce the appointment of Ms. Mariama Sonko as Managing Director¹.

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Directors, shareholders, management and employees of the Organisations announce the passing of our Founder and Executive Chairman, Dr. Karamo N.M. Sonko.

Dr. Sonko was much more than a business leader. He was a visionary, mentor and father figure whose integrity, discipline and unwavering commitment shaped the culture and values of organisations and individuals. He left a lasting impact on communities, institutions, and individuals whose path he crossed, both professionally and personally.

A Distinguished Career in Natural Resources and Mining

Over a distinguished career spanning more than twenty-eight years, Dr. Sonko built an international reputation in natural resources, corporate governance and sustainable development. He held senior executive positions with major mining companies operating across Africa and served as Vice President and Deputy Managing Director of Tasiast Mauritania, later becoming Vice President of Sand Metals before advising several international mining groups.

He held senior leadership positions with several mining companies that contributed to major gold discoveries across Africa and were involved in significant transactions with some of the world's leading mining companies, including the Lundin Group of Companies, where he served as Adviser, as well as Red Back Mining, Kinross Gold, Orca Gold and Perseus Mining ([see list here](#) and [here](#)).

He subsequently founded his own gold exploration and development companies, serving as Founder and Executive Chairman of [Sahara Gold Corporation](#) and Bin Maria Minerals, the latter of which was named in honour of his wife and daughter.

Scholarship and Global Thought Leadership

Dr. Sonko was equally respected as a scholar and global thought leader. He earned a first-class degree from the University of Swaziland, the University of Cambridge and the University of Denver, where he completed his PhD with distinction. [He taught at five universities in North America and Europe, worked for and provided expertise to organisations including the United Nations \(UN\), the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\) and the Organisation of African Unity \(OAU\), now the African Union \(AU\).](#) He spoke internationally, serving as a keynote speaker on several occasions and delivering presentations on natural

¹ M.D. of Jula Consultancy, Sables Sustainable Mining Consultancy and HI; Chairman of GSNEF; and Acting Chairman of Sahara Gold Corporation. She remains General Manager of SMST.

resources, sustainable development and African economic transformation at high-level conferences (see [Jula Consultancy's gallery](#) under "All").

Dr. Sonko served at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), where he contributed to economic development, investment promotion, and regional integration initiatives aimed at advancing Africa's sustainable growth. His work at UNECA and other international organisations helped shape policy discussions on development, private sector investment, and African economic cooperation.

Publications and Research

Dr. Sonko was an accomplished author of numerous academic journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles and scholarly publications. He co-authored several publications with his daughter, Ms. Mariama Sonko, published by leading academic publishers including Palgrave Macmillan and Lexington Books. His scholarly work reflected a lifelong commitment to advancing knowledge in sustainability, governance, leadership, and responsible development (see [Jula Consultancy's gallery](#) under "Publications").

He convened annual high-level webinars and contributed to discussions on issues including Environmental, Social and Governance ([ESG principles](#)), [stakeholder engagement](#), sustainable tourism in Africa, Islamic finance and [tribalism in The Gambia](#) (see [Jula Consultancy's gallery](#) under "All").

He authored a comprehensive report examining tribalism in The Gambia and contributed to academic and professional discourse on [Islamic finance](#) and other areas of socio-economic development. He received the competitive 2017–2018 Research Award in Islamic Economics and Finance from the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI) of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

In addition to his work on [Islamic finance as a complex system](#) and [Islamic banking in The Gambia](#), Dr. Sonko was a recognised scholar of Africa's debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1990s, he published extensively on the impact of Africa's growing external debt burden on national economies, examining the challenges it posed to economic development, financial stability, and long-term growth across the continent. His publications on this topic include [Debt, Development and Equity in Africa](#), also available via [JSTOR](#), the [National Library of Australia catalogue](#), and [Amazon](#).

Dr. Sonko's intellectual contributions were further reflected in the [publication](#) entitled *21st Century African Development Strategies: Facing the Challenges With Innovative Approaches*, co-authored with Professor Haider A. Khan and Ms. Mariama Sonko ([published by Palgrave Macmillan](#)). The book was launched at the UN Science Summit during the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in September 2025, and presents innovative approaches to addressing Africa's economic, social, and development challenges.

Through his research, writings, and public engagements, Dr. Sonko sought to promote ethical leadership, social cohesion, responsible investment, and sustainable development in Africa and beyond.

Business Leadership

As Chairman of [TAF Africa Global](#), Dr. Sonko provided strategic leadership and governance, helping guide the company's long-term vision for sustainable real estate development, investment, and business expansion across Africa. TAF Africa Global is a pan-African real-estate investment and development company focused on sustainable communities, residential neighbourhoods, commercial developments, and strategic business ventures that promote economic growth and long-term development across the continent.

Philanthropy and Social Impact

Deeply committed to philanthropy and social impact, Dr. Sonko founded and self-financed his own Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), [Heeno International](#) (HI), The Gambia's first pan-African humanitarian foundation. HI is a charitable organisation dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable communities. He also championed community development initiatives through organisations such as [The Gambia Special Needs Entrepreneurial Fund \(GSNEF\)](#), which supports persons with disabilities and individuals with special needs through entrepreneurship and economic empowerment programmes in The Gambia. GSNEF is widely regarded as a pioneering initiative in The Gambia and Africa.

Dr. Sonko served as Chairman of WellBoring West Africa and a Trustee of [WellBoring UK](#). He played a key role in expanding WellBoring's mission to West Africa. Through his leadership, the organisation has worked to provide safe, sustainable water supplies for schools and rural communities, beginning in The Gambia and extending to further initiatives in Sierra Leone, contributing to WellBoring's broader goal of improving health, education, and community development through access to clean water.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to education and humanitarian development, he was awarded the [Africa Humanitarian Award in Education](#) in 2025, presented on 5 April 2025 at the 3rd Africa Education Summit held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

A Pioneer in Sustainable Governance

Dr. Sonko developed the [Strategic Management Sustainability Framework \(SMSF\)](#), an innovative framework designed to integrate sustainability into organisational strategy and decision-making. He also co-authored, with his daughter Ms. Mariama Sonko, the book *Demystifying Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)*, published by Palgrave Macmillan ([read more](#)) and officially launched during UN COP28 in Burj Khalifa (the world's tallest building), in Dubai, UAE. This book is the first comprehensive book in the world that addresses ESG holistically. It was also launched on two occasions at the [Shanghai Climate Week](#) in 2025, in Shanghai, China.

In 2025, Julia Consultancy was [ranked 6th among the top 10 leading ESG consultancies in the GCC region](#) by Asia Business Outlook, placed among major global firms such as EY, Deloitte, McKinsey & Company, and KPMG.

His unwavering commitment to ESG principles, responsible leadership, and sustainable development will continue to inspire the Organisations, our partners, and future generations of leaders.

Dr. Sonko's legacy extends far beyond his accomplishments, companies and organisations. He leaves behind a bold vision for the development of Africa and the world at large, rooted in competence, integrity, transparency, social and environmental responsibility, and the creation of sustainable value for future generations.

Leadership Transition

Following his passing, the shareholders and directors convened to ensure the continuity of the Organisations' governance. By unanimous shareholder resolution, Ms. Mariama Sonko has been appointed Managing Director of the Organisations and Acting Chairman of Sahara Gold Corporation². The appointments are effective August 7, 2026.

Since the inception of the Organisations, Ms. Mariama Sonko has worked alongside her father. Personally mentored by him and supported by his closest associates, she has played an active role in shaping the

² M.D. of JC, SSMC and HI; Chairman of GSNEF; and Acting Chairman of Sahara Gold Corporation. She remains General Manager of SMST.

Organisations' strategic direction, sustainability initiatives, international partnerships, investor relations, operations, corporate development, and the planning of future projects.

The shareholders express their full confidence in her leadership and are convinced that she will faithfully continue the vision and legacy of Dr. Karamo N.M. Sonko while leading the Organisations into a new era of growth, innovation, and international expansion.

Closing Statement

The Board, management and employees reaffirm their commitment to all stakeholders, including governments, investors, partners, and local communities. We remain fully dedicated to continuing Dr. Sonko's vision and to building companies recognised internationally for responsible mining, innovation and sustainable development. All ongoing projects will continue in accordance with the values of professionalism, integrity, excellence, and responsible leadership that Dr. Sonko instilled throughout the history of the Organisations.

We extend our deepest condolences to the Sonko family and to everyone whose lives were touched by Dr. Karamo N.M. Sonko.

May he rest in eternal peace. His remarkable legacy will continue to live on through his companies, foundations and the many generations of leaders, professionals, and communities he inspired.

See a list of other tributes here:

[Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education \(MoBSE\), The Gambia, Mourns the Passing of Visionary Education Partner, Dr. Karamo NM Sonko](#)

<https://alkambatimes.com/the-gambian-excellence-004-a-tribute-to-dr-karamo-nm-sonko/>

<https://www.facebook.com/fatunetwork/posts/gambian-excellence-004a-tribute-to-dr-karamo-nm-sonkoby-mustapha-njie-tafit-is-w/1465309771654590/>

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<https://gambiana.com/former-taf-africa-global-chairman-dr-karamo-sonko-dies-in-london/>

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