



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

828 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 • TEL. (212) 953-9130 • FAX (212) 697-1970

Please check against delivery

STATEMENT

OF

H.E. PRESIDENT UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA, GCFR
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Delivered by

H. E. OJO MADUEKWE, CFR
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63RD SESSION

OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2008

Mr President,

I congratulate you, Mr President, on your election to preside over the 63rd session of the General Assembly. Remain assured of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation as you guide our deliberation. May I also express appreciation to your predecessor for the able manner in which he presided over the work of the 62nd session of the General Assembly.

2. In my address to this Assembly last year, I reaffirmed the determination of Nigeria to remain a stable and prosperous nation, anchored on the enduring principles of democracy, good governance, free enterprise, the rule of law and respect for fundamental human rights. We have, in pursuit of these objectives, raised the bar on bold political and economic reforms, aimed at making our economy more investment friendly, and our democracy more inclusive. We continue to count on the support and understanding of the international community, especially our development partners as we accelerate measures to enhance the overall capacity of the Nigerian state.

3. A strong, safe and prosperous Nigeria means a dependable contributor to, not only regional stability and well-being, but the emergent global ethics so crucial for the survival of humanity. From the very beginning of our nationhood, our foreign policy has been tethered to a responsible and proactive role in the United Nations and its commitments everywhere. Thus, we never hesitated to respond unconditionally to demands for sacrifices whenever duty called, whether in Congo or Sierra Leone or Liberia or now in Darfur, and in the next few months, in Somalia. Nigeria is as safe as the rest of the world. That for us is the true meaning of global solidarity and the sense of equal partnership that informed the vision of the founding fathers of this Organization.

4. It is against this background that we raise before this Assembly, the concern of many developing countries, especially in Africa, suffering from the devastating consequences of the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. Most of the civil wars and insurgencies in these countries have been prosecuted with these weapons. And because of their lethality and ready deployment, they may be described as Africa's experience of weapons of mass destruction.

5. We remain convinced that the best and most effective strategy for achieving the goal of preventing, combating and eradicating this illicit and deadly trade is through the elaboration of a legally-binding global instrument, as well as the political will on the part of all, to stem the uncontrolled proliferation of Small Arms. There is need, therefore, for urgent action to criminalize oil bunkering, the sale of oil so acquired and the use of its proceeds to fuel new crisis situations in Africa, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, through the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The same creativity and political will that was demonstrated in confronting "blood diamonds" as a source of regional instability must be available this time in dealing with "blood oil" that now threatens the Gulf.

Mr. President,

6. Nigeria has made enormous sacrifices on behalf of peace in Darfur. We have, over the years, maintained peacekeeping troops in the region, first, under the ambit of the African Union and, now, under the AU/UN hybrid peacekeeping force. We call on the international community, to take bold and robust steps that would lead to the full deployment and operationalization of the AU-UN hybrid peacekeeping force. In the same vein, we call on the Government of Sudan to take steps that will facilitate the attainment of this objective.

Mr. President,

7. It has become evident, midway into the target year of 2015, that the lofty Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) might not be attained by many countries. This much is clear from the outcome of the High-Level Event on the MDGs that took place in the margins of this Session on 25 September 2008. Mindful of the importance of these goals for our development, Nigeria is determined to do everything to ensure the realization of the MDG targets. In this connection, we commend the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in creating the MDG Africa Steering Group to map out strategies for African countries to achieve the targets.

Mr. President,

8. It is time to urge, with the directness these challenging times demand, evidence of a more manifest will on the part of the international community,

especially our development partners, to assist Africa join the rest of the global success story. My delegation is looking at ten such indicators;

- (i) the critical need for a Big Infrastructure Push, especially in Energy and Transportation, without which nothing else is possible on the continent;
- (ii) addressing the food crisis in Africa by redressing the trilogy of Fertilizer imbalance between Africa and other regions of the world; removal of food subsidies in the developed economies; transfer of relevant technology for food production and food processing;
- (iii) revival of the Doha Round of Trade Negotiations;
- (iv) leapfrogging development in Africa through massive investment in Information Technology and higher education;
- (v) devising strategies with African Governments on how to transform the continent's current Brain Drain into Brain Gain;
- (vi) a global commitment towards stemming the flow of small arms and light weapons into Africa;
- (vii) encouraging and supporting national Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) projects in Africa;
- (viii) UN Security Council Reforms that will accord Africa permanent membership of the Council. This will ensure African ownership of its responses since over 60% of issues addressed by the Council are African;
- (ix) attention on Clean Energy Technology development and alternative sources of energy to avert the looming disaster of Climate Change for a continent that is already very vulnerable;
- (x) a breakthrough in Malaria Vaccine, together with more sustained support for the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic, two major impediments to human capacity in Africa.

Mr. President,

9. The recent steep rise in global food prices has presented us with a monumental challenge and the global embarrassment of compounds of

misery sharing increasingly crowded space with compounds of affluence in our global village. It is unacceptable that in spite of technological advancements and resources unimaginable two decades ago, children still die of hunger and malnutrition. How can it be said that the genius that permits us to make living in outer space feasible, looks the other way in the face of over one billion people in the world going to bed hungry, and more than six million children dying each year of hunger and malnutrition. This problem deserves the full attention of this Assembly. **The right to food for all must be pursued with renewed vigour.**

Mr. President,

10. Nigeria condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We reaffirm our support for the counter terrorism measures of the Security Council and the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. We have also been implementing the four pillars of the Global Strategy through measures that have proven effective in combating terrorism. For us, the fight against terrorism is strongly anchored on the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is important that, as we combat this scourge, fundamental freedoms and human rights are neither compromised nor abused.

11. The UN must not relent in its pursuit of the goals of a world in which all nations and peoples live in freedom and dignity and in which all political, economic, social, cultural and human rights are fully guaranteed. Our active participation in the activities of the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights is evidence of this commitment.

Mr. President,

12. We are concerned that drug cartels, often based outside the region, are now targeting West Africa as a transit route for the movement of illicit drugs to other regions. The activities of these drug cartels constitute serious impediment to development in the sub-region. The world must pay adequate attention to this growing problem.

Mr. President,

13. Let me reiterate Nigeria's unwavering support for the United Nations and its objectives and purposes. We are convinced that the United Nations remains the most viable platform for consultations, consensus building and action on the global challenges that we presently face. Mankind has not developed any better substitute.

14. Nigeria believes in the pacific settlement of disputes and peaceful co-existence with our neighbours. We showed that when, on the 14th of August 2008, Nigeria, in full compliance with the ruling of the International Court of Justice, lowered its flag for the last time by withdrawing from the Bakassi Peninsula. For this singular act of statesmanship, Nigeria has justifiably received the commendation of the International Community. Our action accords with our longstanding tradition as a nation that honours its commitments. We believe that if we all, in concert, stand up for these shared values and purposes, our Organization and our world would be a much better place.

15. This can be, and should be a General Assembly like no other, for the crises that face us now have few precedents in scope and complexity. What is required is a new posture to move from data to determination, from rhetoric to result and from words to wisdom. Our many noble visions must begin to somehow find more vigorous forms of expression. A world so greatly challenged must also be a world so much more capable of imagination and boldness. And the platform for such boldness and such imagination is here, in this venerable institution founded 63 years ago on the pillars of peace, justice and freedom for all.

16. Let us never forget the timeless words of the internationalist and Nobel Laureate, who warned that to deal with the problems that we have created, we need to move unto a higher order of thinking than the one with which we created them. The time to do so is now, for the clock of humanity is ticking very fast. Our existential challenge did not end with the Cold War. It has just started.

I thank you.