



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,

AT THE

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria and in my capacity as the current Chairman of the African Union (AU), I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your election as President of this 59th Session of the General Assembly. I assure you of the support and cooperation of Africa, an illustrious son, of which you are. I also like to express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency, the Right Honourable Julian R. Hunte, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, for the dedication and skill with which he presided over the affairs of the fifty-eighth session.

I commend Secretary-General Koff Annan, for his effective leadership and efforts to maintain the status of the United Nations in the face of enormous global challenges.

Mr. President,

Nigeria remains unshakeable in its commitment to, and support for the strengthening of the United Nations and the protection of its cherished ideals, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security as well as cooperation among states in

solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

Mr. President,

The problem of unremitting conflicts in various regions of the world and the ever-increasing difficult task of seeking solutions to them, continue to pose serious challenges to the world body. Nigeria and the African Union commend the United Nations for its determined engagement in crisis resolution and peacekeeping, particularly in Africa. We have noted with appreciation the changes in the concept of peacekeeping.

Notwithstanding, we believe some improvements are still necessary to enable a Peace Operation by the United Nations to address the social and economic challenges that inevitably confront countries emerging from conflict. These socio-economic issues invariably form important part of the causes of the conflict in the first instance.

We also appeal for continued enhancement of the capacity of regional organizations to undertake initiatives on crisis resolution in their respective

regions. For its part the African Union has engaged in improving its mechanism for conflict resolution and in May this year established a Peace and Security Council.

Mr. President,

The first challenge of the AU Peace and Security Council has been the situation in the Darfur Region of Western Sudan, which has aroused world attention by the reported carnage in that region. On behalf of the AU, I want to thank the international community for the humanitarian intervention being undertaken. As is well known, the AU has deployed troops into the region to monitor a cease-fire between the Government of Sudan and the opposing Movements - the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Moreover the first substantive Peace Talks took place in the Nigerian capital Abuja under the auspices of the AU from August 23rd to September 18, 2004. The Sudanese parties reached agreement on the first point of the agenda, namely - Humanitarian Issues, out of their 4 points. They also made progress on the second point, namely, Security

Issues, before adjourning for consultation. Follow-up meeting is expected to be resumed in Abuja about 21st October 2004, on the other issues, namely Political Issues and Economic and Social Issues.

I am closely following the developments in consultation with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union and others. I call upon the international community to continue to lend us its support in resolving the Darfur conflict and its consequences.

It is cheering to note the progress being made in Somalia particularly in constituting the Parliament. The efforts of the regional countries, which are demonstrating an unprecedented collaboration in helping the Somalis to move the process forward, should be applauded. The Somalis themselves should continue to demonstrate commitment to repair past errors and make of their country a respectable member of the AU and the United Nations.

The Great Lakes Region remains a flash point of violence as exemplified by the recent massacre of more than 150 persons in a refugee camp in Burundi. On June 25, 2004, President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo and President Kagame of Rwanda met in Abuja at my instance and agreed to activate the Joint Verification Mechanism. Thereafter, a meeting of all stake holders was held during the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6 - 8 July, 2004 with the participation of the UN Secretary General, in order to accelerate the activation of the Joint Verification Mechanism. I am hopeful that this renewed process would facilitate a better understanding to stem this spate of massacre and engender a peaceful resolution of the protracted crisis in the Great Lakes Region.

With regard to the West African sub-region, the African Union and ECOWAS continue their efforts, with the constant support of the United Nations to ensure steady progress in the peace processes in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. To this end and in order to address the standstill in the implementation of the Linas Marcousis Agreement on Cote d'Ivoire, an

extraordinary Summit was held in Accra, Ghana under the auspices of ECOWAS on July 29th 2004. We benefited from the presence of UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan as well as some non ECOWAS African Heads of State. If the agreements we reached at that Summit are faithfully implemented, an end to the conflict should be in sight.

On the margin of the Accra Summit, we also addressed the problems that were retarding the implementation of the Liberian Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In discussions with all the Liberian leaders, we agreed on decisions on the main contentious issues and we have since been witnessing encouraging signs of implementation of those decisions.

Mr. President,

I should remark that we noticed once again that the delay in providing the resources promised by countries during the Liberian Pledging Conference held here in the UN Headquarters in February 2004 constitutes an avoidable hindrance to the advancement of peace in Liberia. I, therefore call on

all our well meaning partners who were kind enough to make pledges to kindly redeem those pledges.

Mr. President,

While the United Nations is justifiably seized with the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the question of Small Arms and light Weapons (SALW), can no longer be ignored. While the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction is awesome, small arms and light weapons are killing people every day at a rate cumulatively amounting to monumental destruction.

Nigeria and the African Union welcome the commencement of negotiations for an international legally binding instrument to enable States identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons globally. Of particular interest to Africa is the enormous potential that such a legally binding instrument can have on peace and security in our region. We should therefore not relent in our efforts.

Let me seize this opportunity to soundly condemn the totally unacceptable role of mercenaries and their sponsors in Africa. The recent attempted invasion of Equatorial Guinea and other such attempts go against every imaginable rational effort at promoting stability and democracy on the continent. We call on the United Nations to join the African Union in sending the right signals of condemnation to those mercenaries and their sponsors.

Mr. President,

Our quest for global peace and security will prove unsuccessful unless we intensify international cooperation for development and the reduction of poverty. Only four years ago we adopted the Millennium Development Goals which pointedly fixed a target of 2015 for reducing by half those living in poverty. Yet by now, alarm is being raised that if present trends continue, that target may not be met, particularly in Africa which apart from the challenges of development is also being ravaged by pandemic diseases.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union as its current Chairperson I should like to assure this august assembly that we Africans are determined that we shall exert all our efforts to overcome those obstacles to our development that are within our control. To this end we are pursuing, with the personal commitment and involvement of our Heads of State themselves, the implementation of the priorities set in our flagship programme, namely the New Partnership for Africa's Development - NEPAD.

On this note, we appreciate the conclusion in the Secretary-General's "Second Consolidated Report on Progress in Implementation and International Support" for NEPAD that "African Countries have demonstrated their commitment to advancing the implementation of NEPAD by earmarking financial allocations to selected sectoral priorities" and that "the development partners of Africa can give further practical expression to their support for the efforts of African countries by taking action in three important areas: first, by creating an enabling international environment that is supportive of growth and development in Africa; second, by bringing much

needed coherence to trade, aid and debt policies, so that African countries are the net beneficiaries of international actions in those areas; and third, by undertaking concrete measures to accelerate the implementation of NEPAD by making significant financial outlays to fund the key sectoral priorities of NEPAD. I believe that the message to our development partners is very clear.

To demonstrate our commitment to the principle of good governance, transparency and the rule of law, 23 African countries have already subscribed to the Peer Review Mechanism. It should be recalled that the Peer Review Mechanism represents Africa's voluntary commitment to a set of performance codes and standards to foster best practices and share lessons in the management of national affairs.

The promotion of agriculture is being vigorously pursued both for its export potentials and poverty alleviation. Encouraging growth rates in agricultural production are already being recorded in several African countries. Simultaneously we are

intensifying our efforts in the promotion of agro-based industries.

Mr. President,

In furtherance of our efforts at self-help, AU Heads of State and Government held an extraordinary Summit on Employment Creation and Poverty Alleviation in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from September 5-9, 2004. We adopted a far reaching Declaration and Programme of Action. For implementation and monitoring, we also adopted Mechanisms at the National, Regional and Continental Levels.

What may act as a drawback in implementation of this most important area for pulling the African populace off our poverty and misery is the inevitable issue of adequate resources for meeting our otherwise realistic goals. On behalf of the African Union, I appeal to our partners to demonstrate once again our shared common global interdependence and common humanity.

Africa requires genuine partnership anchored on the principle of mutual benefits, to ensure the attainment of sustainable development. One such area of partnership is in respect of Africa's external debts. The negative impact of debt on the economic circumstances of African countries, particularly the LDCs, can no longer be denied. We remain convinced that resolving the lingering debt crisis comprehensively through innovative action, would brighten the prospects of development in Africa.

Mr. President,

Africa welcomes the consensus that emerged from the recent meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Sao Paulo, Brazil. That consensus reflected a shared conviction that the organization can continue to coordinate our view on trade and development matters. This could not be otherwise if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved and the benefits of expanding trade are to be enjoyed by all peoples and societies.

By launching a new initiative to commence a new round of multilateral trade negotiations, developing countries have thrown down the challenge to our development partners in exploiting the global opportunities for growth and development. We hope they will reciprocate.

Mr. President,

Africa remains committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria, tuberculosis and related diseases. Since the last High-Level Plenary meeting on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/ AIDS, we have taken bold steps to deal with the pandemic. Towards this end, we in Nigeria have established a National Scientific Institute for research on HIV/AIDS and intensified public awareness programmes.

In this connection, we welcome the outcome of the recent International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Bangkok, Thailand. We thank the United Nations agencies and all stakeholders for their collective efforts to stem the spread of the disease worldwide. With regard to other deadly preventable diseases,

such as malaria, tuberculosis, polio and whooping cough, my Government has stepped up its efforts. In the next few days, on 2nd October 2004, my Government will again embark on Polio Immunization Programme in coordination with six African states of Chad, Sudan, Cameroon, Niger Republic, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire to ensure maximum effectiveness. These are countries where Polio has been reported fairly recently. Significantly and symbolically the launching with all my brothers and colleagues present will take place in Kano.

Mr. President,

Last year the UN Secretary General launched a United Nations Reform Initiative, which we all warmly commended. In pursuit of this initiative the Secretary General appointed last year, a High Level Panel of Eminent Personalities to examine ways of strengthening the UN through institutional reforms and processes. We are looking forward to the report of that Panel. Nigeria, and indeed Africa, holds the view that the Security Council should be expanded in the permanent and non-permanent categories to make it more representative, effective and

acceptable. We expect that those regions of the world that are currently unrepresented in the permanent membership category should be given membership. Africa whose issues occupy a substantial part of the Security Council's time ought to be accorded priority consideration for permanent membership, and Nigeria, I strongly believe, is a well qualified candidate.

I thank you.