

STATEMENT BY NIGERIA

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NIGERIAN STATEMENT

BY

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HONOURABLE MINISTER OF COMMERCE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

TO THE

**ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD XI), SAO PAULO BRAZIL
13TH TO 18TH JUNE 2004**

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.D. IDRIS WAZIRI
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF COMMERCE OF NIGERIA AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF UNCTAD XI, SAO PAULO, BRAZIL,
WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2004**

Mr. President,

The Nigerian delegation congratulates you on your election as President and wishes to assure you of our cooperation to ensure a successful outcome to this meeting, which also marks the 40th anniversary of UNCTAD. We also wish to thank the Government and people of Brazil for their hospitality and the excellent facilities placed at our disposal. At the same time, I would also like to express our appreciation to the Preparatory Committee of UNCTAD XI for the work done to produce a Draft Conference Negotiating Text while acknowledging as well the hard work put in by the UNCTAD Secretariat in the entire process.

Mr. President,

The 40th anniversary of UNCTAD is occurring at a time of momentous developments in the international arena both on the political and economic scene. There is, therefore, legitimate concern that development issues, which lie at the centre of our concerns in UNCTAD risk being overshadowed by high-profile political events or relegated to the background of international economic priorities. Nigeria, however, believes that economic development remains of great importance largely because the goal of global peace and security can only be attained through improved material conditions and restoration of hope to billions of vulnerable people worldwide. Moreover, it is quite evident that the issues which have been at the centre of development concerns since the

founding of UNCTAD such as increasing the share of developing countries in global economic prosperity, ensuring adequate resource flows, obtaining fair prices for commodities, alleviating the onerous burden of external debt, and increasing market access for goods of export interest to developing countries still remain relevant in this era of globalization.

It should be acknowledged, of course, that the international community has given due prominence to development issues as evidenced by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has, however, become quite clear that prompt and concerted actions as well as necessary resources are needed to secure and achieve the growth rates required to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015. The recently released LDC Report for 2004 posits that on current trends the number of people living in extreme poverty is estimated to increase from 334 million people in 2000 to 471 million in 2015. The Nigerian delegation believes, moreover, that meaningful progress in the achievement of the MDGs requires the integration of the development dimension into international economic processes. We, therefore, share the view that ensuring policy coherence, which is the theme of UNCTAD XI, is an important objective to focus upon. This is particularly important in the context of globalization where the assumption of benefits has not been matched by a candid acknowledgement of the attendant risks and drawbacks.

Mr. President,

There are several ways in which the lack of policy coherence can detract from the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. One of such ways is through simultaneous and sometimes

conflicting liberalization processes. For instance, many developing countries are undertaking liberalization efforts under separate tracks, including unilateral action, bilateral and regional agreements and at the multilateral level. In some cases, they have had to undertake commitments that go far beyond the obligations imposed at the multilateral level. It is, therefore, important to develop coherence and consistency between trade and other economic policies being pursued at national, bilateral, regional and multilateral levels in order to maximize the contribution of such policies to development. In addition, there is need for coherence to ensure that multilateral economic commitments do not undermine the achievement of national or globally agreed socio-economic objectives like poverty alleviation, public health and education.

There is sometimes also a worrying lack of consistency between international economic processes and national development priorities. Developing countries have found out that the amount of policy space available to them to adopt policies deemed in the national interest has become increasingly constrained in the recent past. It is not that they would like to renege on their international commitments, but they certainly ought to be able to benefit from the positive experience of other countries, particularly where it has been shown that certain policies could help bring about growth and development. Such policy space is important for developing countries to build up their supply capacities without which they will not be able to benefit from the opportunities arising from trade liberalization.

Mr. President,

Closely related to this concern is the importance of ownership of design and implementation of development strategies. In Nigeria, we

have taken to heart the need for ownership of our development strategies both at the national and continental levels. At the national level, we recently adopted a National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which aims to reposition the economy by alleviating poverty, fighting the scourge of HIV/AIDS, achieving a GDP growth rate of 7% per annum and creating seven million new jobs by 2007. This national programme is complementary to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) under which our continent has taken primary responsibility for its own development. We nevertheless recognise the importance of doing so in partnership with the international community and, therefore, expect to receive the required support from our partners to achieve the objectives of NEPAD. Our development partners must be seen to honour their commitments in this respect. It should be pointed out in this context that the partnership that Africa is calling for is not limited to government and international organizations but also to business entities and civil society organizations. This is why we support the call for our partners in the corporate sector to observe social responsibility in their activities, especially in developing countries.

It should also be realised that these efforts to increase growth and alleviate poverty are very much dependent on policy consistency at the international level. The commitments made by African countries under NEPAD, including the African Peer Review Mechanism should be matched by more democratic conduct of global economic affairs. This would require, among other things, greater participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making. It would also mean that those who preach the benefits of free trade should extend their beliefs to the area of trade in agricultural goods, where there is need for political will to dismantle protectionist barriers in the markets of

developed countries. Such policy consistency would also mean that there should be progressive liberalization in the labour sector, including the temporary movement of natural persons under Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Mr. President,

In the light of the foregoing observations, the Nigerian delegation calls for meaningful progress in the negotiations in the Doha Work Programme to ensure that the outcome would justify the appellation of a development round. We also call for continued efforts at the international level to integrate development concerns in financial, monetary, and technological fields. This would include the adoption of broader and more flexible approaches to debt relief, including debt cancellation, and measures to increase resource flows to developing countries as well as official development assistance and foreign direct investment. It is also important to focus attention on reducing the digital divide and increasing the participation and benefits of developing countries in the area of Information and Communications Technologies, including the governance of the international Internet.

Mr. President,

The Nigerian delegation also believes very much in the potential of South-South cooperation, as a means of improving the economic opportunities open to developing countries. This is why, in addition to regional and continental initiatives, we have also taken an active interest in promoting South-South cooperation within the ambit of the G-15. We are similarly committed to supporting the launch of a new round of negotiations on the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) and call

on the UNCTAD Secretariat to continue to provide support to this worthy scheme among developing countries.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for a vibrant and active UNCTAD which undertakes high-quality and independent policy analysis and lives up to its mandate as an institution established to promote the development interests of developing countries. We would therefore support all efforts to enhance its ability to play this role effectively. We also acknowledge the useful work being done by UNCTAD in Africa, especially through specific programmes from which we have benefited such as ASYCUDA, DMFAS, training in commercial diplomacy, and commodities. Nevertheless, we would like UNCTAD to widen the depth and scope of its cooperation with African countries, especially in support of NEPAD.

Before I conclude Mr. President, I wish on behalf of my delegation to pay tribute to Mr. Rubens Ricupero, out-going Secretary-General of UNCTAD. He has served with merit and great distinction and will be leaving UNCTAD in a better position to fulfill its mandate than it was when he assumed duties. We wish him well in his future endeavours and feel confident that the international development community will continue to benefit from his wise and thoughtful insights in the coming years.

i thank you for your kind attention.

Ambassador A.D. Idris Waziri
Honourable Minister of Commerce
Sao Paulo, Brazil
16 June 2004