



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

**THE 2017 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DISARMAMENT COMMISSION (UNDC)**

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Madam Chair,

On behalf of my delegation, permit me to congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of this year's Substantive Session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). As you steer the course of our work, my delegation is confident that your experience will guide our deliberations at this session. We assure you of our full cooperation. Also allow us to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Amb. Odo Tevi of Vanuatu for his leadership and contributions as well as the previous chairs of the two working groups for their dedication and hard work. We extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Kim Woo soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his kind remarks.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the African Group by the distinguished representatives of Indonesia and Cameroon respectively. That said, my delegation would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Madam Chair,

Nigeria underscores the importance of the UNDC as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. While recognizing its usefulness and potential as the competent forum for addressing issues of comprehensive nuclear disarmament, we wish to state that the UNDC needs to streamline and improve upon its working methods to enable it deliver on its mandate, with particular reference to nuclear disarmament as a topmost priority, and to pointedly confront the challenges of non-proliferation.

Without a doubt, the continued existence of nuclear weapons remains an existential threat to all mankind. The cost of maintenance and modernization of these weapons are both

outrageous and inexcusable, when compared to resources allocated by States for more useful and productive ventures that could further the growth, development, prosperity and other peaceful and positive articulation of human endeavours.

Madam Chair,

Several UNDC sessions have been concluded without concrete outcomes due to lack of political will and inflexible positions of states. Given that this year's Session marks the final lap of its three-year cycle which began in 2015, my delegation hopes to witness an outcome that provides for modest and unambiguous recommendations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Such a result would no doubt justify our persistence as well as convey the determination of Member States for improvement in the scale and pace of nuclear disarmament, which has remained stalled for decades.

My delegation recalls the entry into force of the Nuclear-Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) forty-seven years ago and the convening of its IXth Review Conference two years ago. Despite the unacceptable outcome of the last NPT Review Conference regarding the implementation of the Treaty's disarmament obligations, the NPT alongside other nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures have remained partly successful in preventing a wide spread of nuclear weapons. My delegation stresses that its universalization is dependent upon the strict compliance with its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As we prepare for the next Review Conference in 2020, beginning with the First PrepCom in May this year, my delegation hopes that efforts of member states would be geared towards strengthening the NPT by truly reinforcing its three pillars.

Nuclear weapons are, by definition, instruments whose sole objective is mass destruction. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that they are inhumane and intolerable weapons that

should be taken off the list of global armaments, as responsible and respected partners in human development projects. Curiously, they remain the only weapons of mass destruction yet to be prohibited.

My delegation seizes this opportunity to again highlight the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which affirms that the threat or use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

Madam Chair,

My delegation reiterates the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that could result from either a deliberate use and/or unintentional explosion of nuclear weapons, and hence this should serve as a compelling reason why some states should end the state of unnecessary denial of the existential threat faced by the human race and the urgent need to address the question of the continued possession of nuclear weapons.

In this context, Nigeria welcomes the adoption of the GA Res 71/258 last year by an overwhelming majority of states as well as the successful convening of the First Session of the UN Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination. The robust and active participation by both states and civil society groups, during the aforementioned Conference, was a pointer to the fact that nuclear weapons are unwelcome in all their ramifications. As negotiations are set to begin in the June/July session, my delegation calls on all states including Nuclear Weapon States and those under their shield to be part of this epoch making process so that the world can collectively achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament and ensure a nuclear weapon free world.

As part of CORE GROUP of states with Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and South Africa

that sponsored the resolution which convened this historic conference, my delegation remains committed to constructively engage in a balanced, transparent and irreversible process that will lead to the prohibition of nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination.

As a State Party to the Treaty of Pelindaba, Nigeria welcomes the establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones(NWFZ) in parts of the world. The treaty serves as a shield for the continent of Africa, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting testing of nuclear weapons. As a measure to ensure a world free from the fear or possibility of the use of nuclear weapons, my delegation further calls on all Member States to support efforts to replicate this measure in the remaining parts of the world, including in the Middle East.

Madam Chair,

As it was during the 2016 session, our deliberations will focus on "recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" as well as "practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". My delegation considers this rich mix as fair and a useful attempt to enrich our deliberations on all layers of disarmament. While the role of the UNDC in developing these concepts are well noted, the Commission should take this step further by translating these agreed elements to reality.

Madam Chair

In the field of conventional weapons, Nigeria has continually highlighted the measures taken in recent times to address the proliferation of conventional weapons, particularly the illicit acquisition and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunitions. A number of States in Africa are suffering from the illicit trade in these weapons. We therefore recognize the need and importance of engaging all States, to significantly contribute to national and regional efforts to address the menace of illicit small arms and

light weapons, including by significantly adhering to the elements of international cooperation and assistance. We hope this Session would highlight the import of upholding our commitments in the course of our deliberations.

Nigeria remains committed to the principle and objective of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and will continue to urge its universality and calls on States Parties to ensure its effective implementation as the first legally binding global instrument to regulate trade in conventional arms. Indeed, the ATT has the potential of preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms through the prevention of their diversions for unauthorized end-use and to unauthorized end-users and non-state actors. As a principle, it could reduce human sufferings as well as contribute to international and regional peace, security and stability. As we proceed with our work at this Session and as a confidence-building measure, my delegation looks forward to the Working Group dedicated to discussing portions of this landmark treaty, to highlight the need for continued elaboration of the usefulness of the ATT, for my country, my region, the entire continent of Africa and the world at large.

Nigeria wishes to highlight the efforts of UN Regional Centers for Peace and Disarmament in terms of their contributions to disarmament measures and other future challenges. My delegation notes the valuable input of the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, particularly in its efforts to ensure the provision of a robust programme on capacity-building and in extending technical assistance to many States on the continent of Africa. My delegation promises to work stridently towards fulfilling the mandate of the UNDC as highlighted by the First Special Session of the United Nations on Disarmament (SSOD- I). We remain hopeful that Member States would be flexible as we begin deliberations in the coming days.

I thank you.