



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 2018 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION (UNDC)**

**NEW YORK, 2 APRIL 2018**

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**Madam Chair,**

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group congratulates you on your election as the Chair of this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We also seize this opportunity to congratulate other members of the bureau on their election, and express appreciation to your predecessor Her Excellency Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for her hard work as Chair of the 2017 Substantive Session.

2. The Group welcomes the appointment of the Chairs of the two Working Groups and looks forward to working with them at this session. The Group also expresses appreciation to the High-Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her remarks. The African Group aligns itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by Indonesia.

**Madam Chair,**

3. The African Group is committed to the principle and validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Group underlines that disarmament and proliferation issues are best addressed through multilateral negotiations in the form of universal, comprehensive and nondiscriminatory agreements.

4. The African Group continues to underscore the importance and the relevance of the UNDC as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. The Group believes that despite some challenges, the UNDC has positively contributed to deliberations on disarmament. In this regard, the Group welcomes the conclusion of work and the adoption, by consensus, of the recommendations on “Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons” during the 2017 UNDC Session, and expresses regret that consensus was not reached on the agenda item

“nuclear disarmament”. In this regard, we look forward to successful deliberations on the Agenda Items for this new cycle.

**Madam Chair,**

5. The Group expresses grave concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and reaffirms that any doctrine justifying their use or threat of use as unacceptable and unjustifiable. It further recalls, the 1996 Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which affirms that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

6. It is in this spirit that the African Group welcomes the historical adoption of the land mark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), on 7 July 2017. The African Group stresses that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will not undermine the NPT, but will rather complement and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime with the NPT as its foundation, including towards fulfilling the nuclear disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT. The Group therefore, wishes to urge all states to support the TPNW by signing and ratifying the Treaty at an early date. It is in view of this that the Group welcomes the award of the 2017 Noble Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for their contribution towards the conclusion of the TPNW and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

7. The African Group would like to stress the urgent need to universalize the NPT, and to ensure a balanced, comprehensive, and universal compliance with each of its three pillars. In this regard, the Group reaffirms the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy without discrimination, and in conformity with Article IV of the NPT.

8. The Group notes that on 23 April 2018, the Second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT will begin and, it is hoped that the meeting would serve as an opportunity to strengthen the NPT by truly reinforcing its three pillars. The Group remains committed to promoting the overall objectives of the Treaty and calls on other states parties, especially the nuclear weapon states, to fulfill their disarmament obligations and their irrevocable undertakings towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The lack of progress towards the implementation of these solemn undertakings has caused increasing divisions among NPT State Parties, and this needs to be rectified during this Review Process to restore confidence and trust among State Parties. The Group regrets that the 9<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference of 2015 could not achieve consensus on a final outcome document because of a disappointing decision by three States Parties to the Treaty.

**Madam Chair,**

9. The African Group continues to stress that the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones constitutes an important measure towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. Thus, the Group wishes to, once again, re-state the proud position of Africa as a nuclear weapon free zone, through the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba on 15 July 2009. The Group seizes this opportunity to call on all Member States to support efforts to replicate this measure in the remaining parts of the world, especially in the Middle East.

10. The Group unequivocally supports the call for the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free-zone in the Middle East and continues to express deep dissatisfaction at the failure to implement, as agreed, commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all

other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It expresses its strong disappointment at the fact that the Conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012, was not convened as mandated. In this regard, the commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, as well as related objectives of the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, remain valid until the establishment of the Zone.

**Madam Chair,**

11. The African Group wishes to highlight the goal of General Assembly resolution entitled: “Follow-up to the 2013 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament” as an integral part of the overall objective of a nuclear free world and calls for its effective implementation. The Group looks forward to the High-Level International Conference and believes that it would serve as an opportunity for the General Assembly to make concrete recommendations, as well as intensify international efforts to ensure a nuclear free world.

12. The Group welcomes the convening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on the CTBT held in New York, in September 2017, and highlights the importance of achieving universal adherence to this instrument, bearing in mind the special responsibilities of nuclear weapon States in this regard, and to encourage the remaining Annex II States, in particular nuclear weapons States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay, in order to ensure its entry into force.

13. The African Group re-affirms the importance of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), not only as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament issues, but one that should work to unlock the deadlock in nuclear disarmament negotiations. The Group reiterates its call on the urgent need for the

CD to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and to work towards the realization of the objectives for its establishment in its negotiations.

**Madam Chair,**

14. The African Group emphasizes the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humanity. To that end, the Group stresses that outer space, as the common heritage of all humankind, must be explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all States, irrespective of their social, economic or scientific development.

15. The Group stresses the importance of the international legal framework that allows equal exploration of outer space based on the principles of non-appropriation and peaceful uses of outer space in conformity with the five United Nations Treaties governing space activities, in particular the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the activities of States in the exploration and the use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies. In this regard, the Group maintains that the recommendations of The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities continue to represent an important contribution towards maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

**Madam Chair,**

16. The Group welcomes the adoption of the African Space Policy and Strategy in 2016, and regards it as an important policy framework towards the realization of an African Outer Space Programme within the framework of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. In this regard, the Group reiterates that the immense potential of space technology and applications should be equally beneficial to all Member States regardless of their level of socio-economic or scientific development, and

calls on the United Nations to promote equal and non-discriminatory access to outer space for all nations.

17. The proliferation of space debris remains a major concern for the African Group due to its consequences on the future of exploration and use of outer space. Therefore, the mitigation of space debris and the limitation of their creation should be among the priorities of the work of the United Nations. It is against this background that challenges related to space activities, in particular space debris, should be addressed in such a way that it will not jeopardize the development of space capabilities of developing countries.

18. The African Group continues to highlight efforts by the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in the context of its contributions to disarmament issues and in providing the requisite assistance to member States of the African Group, in the implementation of disarmament, peace and security initiatives. The Group wishes to stress the need to further strengthen all UN regional centers for disarmament, to fully discharge their mandates in this regard.

19. Finally Madam Chair, the African Group wishes to restate the critical importance of political will and adherence to transparency, including the principles of verifiability and irreversibility in disarmament in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group appeals for sustained and meaningful dialogue, as we begin deliberations on major issues, and looks forward to concrete suggestions and consensus towards achieving peace and security for all.

**I thank you.**