



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**ON**

**‘IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS AND  
COMMITMENTS IN REGARD TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE  
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN’**

**AT**

**THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE  
2010 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**NEW YORK, 2 JULY, 2010**

My delegation wishes to congratulate you, the President, and the bureau on their election. We commend the bureau for the manner it has led the Council in preparing for this session and have no doubt that under your continued leadership, deliberations at this High-Level segment would result in logical conclusions.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the group of 77 and China and commend the choice of the focus of this segment as very appropriate and complimentary to our collective endeavour to sustain the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are convinced that no time could have been more propitious than this when efforts at development are being undermined by a multiplicity of global crises: food, energy, financial and economic as well as the pervading impact of climate change.

Nigeria is fully committed to the implementation of the IADGs, particularly those pertaining to gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially in the context of the Beijing Declaration, the Millennium Declaration, the World Summit and the Ouagadougou Plan of action. We recognize the twin concepts as an important cross-cutting issue, thus compelling their mainstreaming into national policy development.

**Mr. President**

Nigeria acknowledges the central role of the womenfolk as critical to the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger if humanity is to attain a healthy, stable and prosperous society. As a result, the Government did not only establish the national body for the eradication of poverty, namely the National Agency for Poverty Eradication (NAPEP) but also charged it along with other related agencies, to among other things, pay particular attention to gender equity-related issues and to continually devise mechanisms that focus on responding to the needs and interests of women. Today there has been a marked increase in national strategies to bolster the competitive edge of women and assist them in entrepreneurial development and deeper involvement in decision-making. Examples include the establishment of Business development Fund for Women (BUDFOW) and Women Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFTEE).

Further, in addition to the statutory allocation, Government has since 2005 been granting more budgetary allocation of 5% from debt relief gains to accommodate gender issues. At all levels of governance, capacity-building projects and training of women, particularly on gender mainstreaming and skill acquisition, are being undertaken.

**Mr. President,**

It is in the area of education that efforts at bridging the gap in gender equality and economic and political empowerment of women are more pronounced. In Nigeria, the ratio of boys to girls in primary education has continued to improve. While school enrolment for both males and females has been progressively increasing at the secondary and tertiary levels, efforts are not relenting in scaling-up incentives for parents to send their girl-children to school. Indeed, many states of the Federation have enacted laws

mandating parents to send their children to schools. This has therefore greatly up-scaled the school enrolment for the girl-child. Although the proportion of women in the national parliament still falls short of the 30% target, that of women in non-agricultural wage employment, especially in decision-making capacities, has continued to improve, thus engendering hope of a corresponding improvement in the Parliament.

Land reform is a cardinal element in the Nigeria's 7-point development agenda. This will hopefully remove the major obstacles in women's land right, eliminate the conflicts in the laws governing land regimes and facilitating women's access to land and security of tenure; as well as enhancing women's limited access to financial resources to purchase land and optimally utilizing it.

**Mr. President,**

Disease pandemics place a heavy burden on society. This is more so in African societies where efforts at implementing the IADGs, including the MDGs, have to contend with the ravaging impacts of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. For obvious reasons, the burden of these diseases weighs heavier on the women. Nigeria has responded by consistently implementing strategies reached through concerted and collaborative efforts, including those articulated and adopted at national, regional and international fora. However, more emphasis is currently being focused on prevention of these diseases both at the national and sub-national levels.

**Mr. President**

Nigeria's commitment to reach the optimum level of implementation of all IADGs is rooted in the conviction that their achievement is imperative for the over all national socio-economic and political development. However, while the resolve is rock-solid and results so far achieved encouraging, concerns still abound. The limited availability of means to sustain medium-to-long term actions is a major militating challenge.

Nigeria has undertaken robust and calculated socio-economic policy reforms aimed not only at improving our net macro-economic deliverables but also to provoke value reorientation and addition. However, the consequences of the confluence of global crises, from 2007 to date, have come with unforeseen reversal in fortune. Naturally, the capacity of Government to champion the cause of gender equality and the empowerment of women is being undermined by these economic misfortunes with real concerns that harmful forces of traditional cultural practices and stereotypes could frustrate the modest achievement in bridging gender disparity.

My delegation calls for the strengthening of the linkage between the expression of commitment and the actual capacity to implement them. In the continuing efforts to address all aspects of the current global developmental crises, therefore, special attention needs to be paid to those issues that would guarantee the security, wellbeing and enhance the financial situation of society at large, but of great benefit to women in particular. Among others, emphasis should be given to:

- Increasing commitment to and funding of agricultural development;
- improving infrastructure base of the economy;
- boosting market access;
- providing more technical assistance and capacity-building programmes and projects;
- intensifying enlightenment efforts through improved outreach to the rural woman;
- combating communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- seriously addressing and implementing measures to combat the impact of climate change with special focus on adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing needs of the developing countries;
- scaling up of official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries; as well as
- extending more debt relief packages, including outright debt cancellation, in favour of the poorer countries.

Concluding, **Mr. President**, Nigeria wishes to reiterate that women represent the fountain of life and the bedrock of society. Their place as the first and last frontier of society is indisputable. Mere adoration and declaration of commitment without tangible and demonstrable will to implement such commitments remains a disservice to humanity. Let us therefore resolve to promote a harmonious and happy society that humanity craves through the faithful implementation of all IADGs, especially those that grant equal status and empower our womenfolk as partners in development.

14. No doubt, the upcoming High Level Plenary meeting on MDGs, in September 2010, affords us another opportunity to recommit ourselves to a faithful implementation of all goals that would change the world. We look forward to this event as we entreat the international community to take a maximum advantage of it.

I thank you.