



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

828 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 • TEL. (212) 953-9130 • FAX (212) 697-1970

(Please check Against Delivery)

STATEMENT

BY

**Ambassador Simeon A. Adekanye
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Nigeria**

AT

The ECOSOC Special Event on “Food Crisis in Africa”

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 2005

Mr. President,

I would like to express our appreciation to the Council under your leadership for organizing this special event to focus attention on the food crisis in Africa. It is fitting that the Council has invited as panelists, distinguished individuals to leadoff the discussion drawing from their expertise and experience. It is our hope that by the time this special event is over, we would all be better informed, and challenged, not only to tackle Africa's food crisis, but also the continent's special needs, taking as the compass for action the decisions of world leaders at the September Summit.

The causes of the chronic food crises in Africa are on the surface straightforward. They include recurring droughts, debilitating diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, conflict, and weak investments in agriculture. The solutions to these problems are known, but, regrettably, they are not within Africa's grasps.

To understand Africa and by implication, its problems and challenges, we must take into account the uniqueness of the continent. The Millennium Project has identified five structural reasons that have rendered Africa the most vulnerable region in the world. These include its adverse geopolitics, remoteness, low productivity, high transport costs and susceptibility to disease. This is a lethal combination for a single continent and reasons enough for better appreciation of Africa's needs and challenges.

Across Africa there are pockets of food crises attributable to different factors; some of which are natural while others are induced. Whatever the underlying factors may be, Africa is in dire need of food to meet immediate and long-term challenges. Against the background of hunger and malnutrition accounting for more deaths than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined, and the fact that the food crises in Africa is forecast to worsen in the years ahead, a targeted and integrated response would be required to deal comprehensively and effectively with the food crises.

While recognizing the structural reasons adduced by the Millennium Project, I should stress the urgent need for increased investments commensurate with the magnitude of the problem. There should be a twin track approach to meet immediate needs through emergency measures that, of necessity, include generous external assistance, and long-term strategies to significantly increase

and improve productivity in Africa. In this regard, the priorities and projects identified by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) must be implemented without delay. In particular, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme, if fully implemented, would usher in the much-needed Green Revolution required to rid Africa of the scourge of hunger. Similarly, there should be concrete action to address the challenges of health, education, capacity building, strengthening of institutions as well as assure Africa of market access for its products. World leaders acknowledged at their recent Summit that Africa has made progress in translating some of the laudable goals of NEPAD into concrete action, especially in the core priority areas.

African Governments have committed themselves to allocate at least 10% of their annual budgets to agricultural development. As President Obasanjo stated in his address to the General Assembly last September, "our agricultural policies and practices are tailored to expansion capable of feeding our people, exporting some of the produce and providing raw materials for our industries. We are investing in new technology and improved seedlings, combating drought, exchanging information on best practices and seeking external markets for our products". Indeed, Africa is determined for its own sake, to carry through with its commitment to promote good governance, accountability, and transparency in the management of its resources and institutions, and more importantly, to protect human rights and the rule of law.

Mr. President,

If these commitments are to be met, the international community, especially donor countries would also have to provide budgetary support by channeling more aid to agriculture and rural development. We must, as a global community, bound by a common destiny, overcome the lukewarm attitude that has greeted high profile appeals to address crises in Africa. It does not augur well for contributions to the UN Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAP) to address Africa's crises to continue to fall short of actual requirements as the recent case of Niger Republic has shown.

Secondly, steps must be taken to address Africa's external debt problems. In this regard, Africa welcomes the recent decision of the G-8 countries to cancel the multilateral debts of 18 HIPC countries. More needs to be done if Africa is to mobilize the requisite resources for its sustainable development.

Thirdly, the various pledges of support and other commitments to Africa must be fulfilled in a timely and coordinated manner. In this regard, Africa expects the United Nations, through a strengthened Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, to fulfill its mandate. Of course, ECOSOC also has an important role to play especially during the annual high-level dialogue, as well as the soon to be convened Development Cooperation Forum.

Fourthly, strong links of partnerships with Africa both in the context of North-South and South-South cooperation would need to be strengthened. NEPAD provides a useful framework to promote such partnerships.

Fifthly, urgent steps should be taken to address the issue of voice and representation for Africa in international financial and economic institutions.

Finally, there should be assistance for investments in early warning systems, vulnerability analyses, contingency planning and rapid response mechanisms, with the UN system playing supportive roles. We believe that when taken together, these measures would undoubtedly place Africa on track to achieve the broad objectives and visions of NEPAD and at the same time meet the goals and targets of the MDGs. A strong Africa, capable of feeding its teeming population and at ease with itself, would be an effective global partner.

I thank you.