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STATEMENT

BY

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HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE

THE UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON NUCLEAR  
DISARMAMENT

NEW YORK, THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

Let me begin by expressing the appreciation of His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan for the invitation to address the opening ceremony of this historic meeting of the General Assembly (GA) on nuclear disarmament. Let me acknowledge, at this stage, the presence of eminent world leaders. It is a testament to the importance of this remarkable gathering that we have amidst us, Excellencies the President of Brazil as well as the Prime Ministers of Ireland and Japan respectively.

I should also commend the efforts of the President of the General Assembly as well as those of your predecessor, in organizing this meeting. I should like to seize this opportunity to also thank you, the Secretary General, for your insightful remarks. This initiative by the Non-Aligned Movement which later crystallized in the first ever High-level meeting on the subject of nuclear disarmament is both timely and noble.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On 24 January 1946, the UN General Assembly took a bold and decisive step, when it unanimously adopted its first resolution establishing the Commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy. Since then, and despite the best intentions and efforts, the challenges of the successor brand, nuclear weapons, have continued to haunt our world.

Nuclear weapons are, by definition, weapons whose sole objective is mass destruction. The question then should be, why is the world planning to mass destruct? Nuclear disarmament is an idea whose time has finally come. Mankind has lived on the edge for too long. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that nuclear weapons are inhumane and unacceptable weapons that should be taken off the list of global armaments, as responsible and respected partners in human development projects.

We have witnessed the pain of natural disasters and the miseries they unleash on States all over the world, including the costs of recovery and rehabilitation which run into billions of dollars. But we are also aware that unlike natural disasters, adequate humanitarian response might not be possible, following a single nuclear explosion or detonation in a populated area. In view of this, States are not expected to keep developing or possessing nuclear weapons. Therefore, the Zero tolerance shown by States against chemical and biological weapons, which are similar weapons of mass destruction, should be extended to all types of nuclear weapons.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Need I underscore as we now know that, in the end, nuclear weapons do not necessarily ensure security. On the contrary, they exacerbate fear and entrench mutual distrust in all ramifications due to the threat and assurance of death and destruction. The moral watershed, I should stress, is that enormous resources that could truly address hunger and poverty at all levels are wasted annually in the cycle of developing, maintaining and re-designing these weapons.

No State acquires a nuclear weapon without due consideration on its future deployment or use in one capacity or another. In other words, the policy of nuclear deterrence is predicated on actual willingness and capacity of all possessors of such weapons to use them. My country believes the time has come for commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons for the prohibition of their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and destruction.

I must acknowledge the little progress made, particularly in few bilateral agreements freely entered by some world powers to reduce the number of their nuclear arsenals. Notwithstanding these arrangements, the bigger existential threat remains; however, that, irrespective of the number of these weapons left in arsenal of States worldwide, the risk remains that they could one day be used accidentally or on purpose.

The willingness by any Member State of this noble body to use nuclear weapons, either explicitly or implicitly as a matter of policy should be considered unacceptable. The horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are all too real to contemplate another scenario. They should assist to deepen our resolve to prevent the recurrence of such unspeakable, yet unnecessary death and destruction.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Nigeria remains resolute in its support for total nuclear disarmament and ready to partner with all States willing to realise a future of progress for our children in a world without nuclear weapons. We should seize this momentum to address the need to unblock the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and other deliberative multilateral bodies established through the instrumentality of the General Assembly. The road through

negotiations could be tough and tortuous. Our collective resolve is to stay committed to all obligations, particularly in the agreed structure of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while ensuring that deadlock is not acceptable if we must prevent future catastrophe.

The contributions of nuclear-weapon-free-zones remain pivotal to the overall goal of achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament. Nigeria unvaryingly supports the establishment of these zones across all regions, including in the Middle East. I also wish to seize this opportunity to call on all States to support existing treaties and; in particular, Nuclear-Weapon States, to ratify related protocols to all treaties establishing such zones, to withdraw reservations and respect the de-nuclearization status of these zones.

One could agree no less with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that, the problem is not just proliferation; but the continued existence of nuclear weapons themselves and as he rightly highlights, "there are no right hands for the wrong weapons" Our efforts to outlaw, eliminate and consign nuclear weapons to the dustbin of history must start now.

**I thank you**