



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. DR. ENIOLA OLAITAN AJAYI**

**AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
NIGERIA TO THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

**ON**

**SCOPE AND APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF  
UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION**

**AT**

**THE 78<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK, 13 OCTOBER 2023**

**Mr. Chair,**

My delegation wishes to express gratitude to the Secretary-General for the indepth Report as contained on A/78/130 on the Scope and Application of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction. We align with the Statements of the African Group and Non-Aligned Movement on the application of Universal Jurisdiction.

2. My delegation reiterates its concern about the uncertainty of the application of this principle. We also call on the international community to adopt measures that will put an end to the abuse and political manipulation of the principle, to ensure that the scope of the principle is clearly defined to avoid abuse.

3. My delegation welcomes the adoption of Resolution A/77/111 by the General Assembly, in particular operative paragraph 3, which “Invites the Working Group of the Sixth Committee, to be established at its seventy-ninth session, to consider and comment on the question “on the relevant elements of a working concept of universal jurisdiction” My delegation looks forward to a constructive deliberation on the question on the topic.

**Mr. Chair,**

4. Nigeria believes that the principle of Universal Jurisdiction is an important principle of international law, as it is designed to prevent impunity, promote adherence and respect for the rule of law and fundamental freedoms worldwide and to punish those in leadership positions responsible for the most appalling crimes and atrocities, thereby giving hope for justice to so many, by demanding strict adherence to the rules of international humanitarian law.

5. The increasing pattern where perpetrators of heinous crimes escape into territories outside the original territories where they committed that crime, in order to escape prosecution, makes it imperative for all states to adopt legislations and measures which make it possible for such persons to be prosecuted wherever they are apprehended, under the principle of Universal Jurisdiction.

6. As a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Nigeria has contributed to the evolution of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction in criminal matters as developed within the court. Nigeria continues to work with other State Parties to the treaty to ensure that the application of the principle by the court is equitable and practical, especially in

cases where it is likely to impact on the political stability of any state.

**Mr. Chair,**

7. Commitment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the elimination of impunity, crime against humanity and war crime remains unrelenting. To this end, Nigeria has enacted series of legislations to curb impunity in the country. These laws include: Terrorism Prevention Act of 2022, The Boko-Haram Proscription Order of 2013, the Federal High Court Practice Direction Order of 2014, Practice Direction of Court of Appeal and Supreme Court, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act of 2015, Nigeria's Evidence (Act as Amended in 2011) as well as Terrorism Prevention (freezing of international terrorists fund and other related measures). All these are with the view to bringing perpetrators of terrorism and other related offenses to book.

8. The foregoing notwithstanding and taking cognisance of the fact that deliberations on this agenda item by the Sixth Committee, Nigeria is of the view that the principle of Universal Jurisdiction should, as much as possible, only be used as a last resort. It must not be used recklessly by States to assume jurisdiction prematurely or hastily over matters when there is a possibility of cooperating with the State where a crime was originally committed, especially through the mechanism of

extradition agreements or agreements on mutual legal assistance. Universal Jurisdiction must not be used by stronger countries to force their domestic legal systems on less endowed countries through a deprivation of the prosecutorial authority of the latter.

**Mr. Chair,**

9. In conclusion, the delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria wishes to use this medium to appeal to the international community to address constructive criticisms of all concerned parties and allay their fears through targeted messaging, creating awareness and possible modification of the application of the principle. If properly articulated, communication and creating awareness would certainly engender trust and encourage greater cooperation among Member States on the applicability of the principle of Universal Jurisdiction. This must be done to avoid even a hint of bias or political motivation.

Thank you for your attention.