



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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

Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

OF

H.E. PRESIDENT UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA, GCFR
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

DELIVERED BY

OJO MADUEKWE, CFR
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 64TH SESSION

OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

Mr. President

On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the President of the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I have no doubt that this distinguished Assembly would benefit from your wealth of experience and wisdom. Let me, therefore, assure you of the full support and cooperation of my country.

Similarly, I wish to commend the President of the 63rd Assembly, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, for the able and effective manner with which he conducted the affairs of that Session.

Mr. President

Last year, we were hopeful that the world would soon put behind it the devastating impact of the various global crises in energy, agriculture, and financial sectors. However, in spite of the efforts by the international community, the developing world is yet to experience any relief from these crises. There is no doubt that the international community needs, more than ever before, to fulfill its commitments to the developing world if more than half of humanity is to avoid an imminent calamity.

It is in this connection, that we welcome and applaud the efforts of the United Nations, in particular the outcome of the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis held in New York last June. We call for the support and implementation of the recommendations of the conference. It is our hope that these recommendations will receive the unconditional support of the developed nations.

Equally important is the need for global efforts to boost food security. Efforts at increasing food production, whether for domestic consumption or for export, require collaboration between investors, organizations and government. It is pertinent to reiterate our call for the removal of the huge agricultural subsidies that the developed countries continue to give to their farmers, which have continued to defy the logic of free market economy and remain unfair to millions of poor peasant farmers across the world.

Mr. President

As we approach the count-down to 2015, a convergence of many factors, including the global economic crisis, is threatening not only the actualization of the targets for the Millennium Development Goals, but also the substantial gains already made. Unless we act fast, our dream of lifting the vast majority of humanity out of extreme poverty, hunger and disease would remain an illusion. Donors and recipient countries alike should make more effort to fulfill their commitments under the programme. On our part, we are determined to do all we can in order to attain the

MDG targets, and we are calling on the international community to continue to provide support.

Mr. President

The Summit of the African Heads of State on Roll-Back Malaria, which was held in Abuja in 2000, adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action to reduce malaria by 50% in Africa by 2010. To achieve this goal, African countries affected by malaria were expected to devote 15% of their public expenditure to the health sector. Although considerable efforts have been made by the affected countries, as well as by donor agencies, the goal of Roll-Back Malaria has not been realized. Malaria by far remains the biggest killer disease for children under 5-years old in Africa. Africa is committed to the goal of eliminating malaria, and to this end, my country intends to host the Abuja-Plus-Ten summit on Roll-Back Malaria in 2011. We would therefore appreciate the support of the Secretary-General not only to make the proposed Summit possible, but also to facilitate the realization of its objective.

Mr. President

The quality of participation at the just-ended Special Session on Climate Change is a testimony to the global realization that Climate Change poses a real existential threat to humanity. I commend the Secretary General for his consistent engagement with the issue of climate change, and call on all Member States to re-dedicate themselves to reversing the worst effects of this phenomenon. For us in Africa, as the continent that hosts 15 of the world's 20 countries that are most vulnerable to the impact of Climate Change, we hope that the outcome of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change coming up in Copenhagen later this year will be an acceptable response to this global threat.

Mr. President

Even in the middle of this tale of global economic and financial woes, there is a silver lining in the sky. We are gratified and greatly encouraged by the increasing rapprochement between the United States and Russia on nuclear disarmament. The idea of a nuclear-free world, the architecture of which are now being put together, has great appeal for many of us. Such an outcome, probably achievable in our lifetime, would not only result in a safer world but would free resources for use in sectors that would better benefit humanity. Nigeria encourages all nuclear powers to identify with this great initiative, this dream, and to embrace any and all initiatives that promote the

achievement of the goal of a world free of nuclear armament and the apocalyptic nightmare.

It is in this connection that I applaud the conclusion and bringing into force of the Pelindaba Treaty (The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone), which bans the testing, manufacturing, stockpiling, acquisition and possession of nuclear weapons in Africa. This is a commendable testimony to Africa's total rejection of the proliferation, indeed, existence, of nuclear weapons. We call on all other regions to follow suit. The NPT Review Conference coming up next year provides an opportunity that should not be missed.

Mr. President

While we applaud this development, let us not forget that there are weapons still being produced which have killed more people than nuclear arms. I speak, in particular, about the production and illicit export of Small Arms and Light Weapons to regions like my own, where they become weapons of mass destruction – destroying lives, property, economies and dreams – as well as the undermining of national and regional efforts at development.

Mr. President

We are all aware of the close link between small arms and organized crime, drug trafficking and, in the case of Nigeria, piracy and oil smuggling in the Niger Delta. The proliferation of small arms in West Africa is fast turning the region into a major transit point for illicit drugs, thus also facilitating the growth of criminal syndicates, some with enough fire-power to challenge a nation's military force. This is why we continue to call on the international community to demonstrate commitment to check this menace by implementing existing initiatives, as well as develop new and legally-binding ones, where necessary, geared toward achieving the goal of preventing, combating and eradicating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and regulating the transfer of conventional weapons in general. The full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small and Light Weapons would be a very good beginning.

Mr. President

Although over the past decade, West Africa has made considerable progress by way of building or strengthening democratic structures in our countries, the job is far from done. Peace and security challenges remain daunting in some parts of the sub-region. As Current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E Umaru Musa Yar'Adua had sent a Special Envoy to His Excellency President Mamadou Tandja of Niger Republic with a view to establishing a line of communication with him in favor of a peaceful

resolution of the political problems of our neighbor to the North. A delegation of Foreign Ministers of ECOWAS undertook a similar visit with the same objective. Our role is largely mediatory but we await with cautious optimism that the democratic imperative will be upheld.

The situation in Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry is somewhat more cheerful. Guinea Bissau held successful elections last July and, as you may be already aware, President Malam Baca Sanha was sworn in on 8 September. With that, Guinea Bissau can now look forward with hope to a peaceful and bright future.

Mr. President

In Guinea Conakry, where elections have again been slated for next January, we continue to impress on the authorities the need for the country to return to democratic rule. We hope that these efforts will yield dividends, in the form of an elected civilian government early next year.

ECOWAS has proven over and over again its willingness and capacity to come to the aid of its members in their hour of need. We will, in that spirit, continue to make our best efforts to ensure that peace and stability reign in the region, to facilitate the realization of the objectives implied in its name. We continue to count, as usual, on the support of the United Nations system.

Mr. President

Nigeria continues to make giant strides in our effort to build a peaceful, stable and prosperous nation, able to provide the best possible life for its citizens and able to fulfill its international commitments and obligations. We have made great progress in laying a solid foundation for democracy, and we are seeking to build on this foundation to grow an economy that will see Nigeria take its rightful place among the world's economic powerhouses. However, there are challenges. Some we can deal with ourselves; others we need help with in terms of the support and cooperation of our friends and allies, as well as that of the UN family.

Those who have been watching events in our country in the past few months will testify to the progress we have made in the Niger Delta, to find durable solutions to the political, social and environmental problems of one of the most strategic regions of our country. Today, relative peace has returned to the Niger Delta, largely on the back of an Amnesty deal which Government and erstwhile militants forged and are implementing together. The return of peace to the region would provide the platform

for meeting the aspirations of the people, as well as allow the return of full economic activity there.

Mr. President

Nigeria is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the majority of international and regional human rights instruments. Our Constitution guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms. Many here will attest to the fact that our human rights performance has improved since the return to democracy in 1999, after many years of military rule. But there is still a lot to do, as we admitted last February during our review under the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council. We have received various recommendations following the review, the overwhelming majority of which we have accepted, and we are taking appropriate national steps, including the strengthening of National Human Rights Commission, to implement the recommendations, which would lead to enhancing the enjoyment of human rights by the citizenry.

Mr. President

In our endeavor to overcome the constraint of the present gap between the nation's increasing demand for power and the available supply to drive our development, we join others in pursuit of reliable, cheap, and environmentally-friendly alternative sources of energy. In this regard, we are gratified by the support and assistance we continue to receive from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as a Non-Nuclear State, on exploring alternative sources of electricity generation, as well as in the areas of radiation control, waste management and training. We will continue to collaborate closely with the agency, as well as rely on the assistance of our allies and friends.

Mr. President

Nigeria welcomes the on-going reform and democratization of the United Nations system and notes the progress made in the inter-governmental negotiation process. We encourage all parties to continue the negotiation with renewed vigor with a view to achieving the desired objectives.

Of particular importance to Nigeria is the enlargement and democratization of the UN Security Council. It is unacceptable that Africa, with 53 countries, is not represented in the permanent seat category of the Council. We call upon member-states to demonstrate the necessary political will to bring about the long-awaited reform, to make the Security Council more legitimate, democratic, transparent and inclusive.

Mr. President

Nigeria's commitment to the United Nations and the international system has been demonstrated over the years. This commitment accords with the provisions of our Constitution which enjoins us, among others, to promote international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and to promote respect for international law and treaty obligations. Our international behavior has always been guided by those noble foreign policy objectives.

The role Nigeria has played, and will continue to play, in peace-keeping in the sub-region, the continent and with the UN around the world is a clear testimony to its unflinching commitment to joining hands with others, especially the United Nations, in laying solid foundations upon which human prosperity could be built. This is why we welcome the new strategy, by the United Nations to strengthen partnership between troop contributing countries and the United Nations, especially in the provision of adequate resources and capacity to strengthen regional peace keeping initiatives.

As usual, Nigeria will continue to draw on its vast experience and commitment in its efforts to contribute to the realization of the objectives and values of the United Nations. We assure all our allies and friends that Nigeria will continue to be a responsible global member of the United Nations, providing leadership, especially on issues concerning West Africa and the rest of the world.

I thank you.