



STATEMENT

By

DR GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN, GCON, GCFR
President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
65TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, USA**

24 SEPTEMBER 2010

Mr President,

I extend sincere congratulations to you for your well-deserved election as President of the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I assure you of the support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation throughout your tenure.

This session coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of many African countries including Nigeria. It is true that the UN played an important role in the acceleration of decolonization, in part through the passage of many resolutions supporting the rights of colonies to self determination. The independence and subsequent admission of many of these countries into the UN has greatly enhanced the organization's legitimacy thereby advancing the noble goals of the UN Charter.

Nigeria was one of the countries to emerge from colonialism in 1960 into a whole new world of independence and sovereignty, to take on the task of nation-building, and to play the international role that destiny had conferred on it. Our participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo, seven days after our independence, was in direct and deliberate fulfilment of the international role that we set for ourselves.

Since then, we have participated in numerous UN peacekeeping missions, as well as in similar regional endeavours. Nigeria has and will

continue to be an active participant in the work of the United Nations, striving therein to promote national, regional and global objectives.

Despite many years of independence, many countries still face daunting challenges of nation-building. It is in this connection that the Millennium Summit of 2000 adopted a set of goals to be realized by 2015. The outcome of the MDG events of the last couple of days here in New York inspires a real appreciation of the enormity of the task ahead of many countries, including Nigeria. The urgency of the action needed to address the situation has been clearly and unambiguously underscored in the intervening discussions.

Nigeria has its own fair share of challenges which we must overcome. For example, progress on MDGs 4 and 5 which relate to reduction of maternal and child mortality have been relatively slow. The weakness of the primary health care system and limited referral institutions remain crucial challenges in the health care sector. On the positive side, Nigeria has recorded remarkable progress in the provision of universal basic education and we are also in the process of harmonizing baseline data that would assist us in the proper monitoring and evaluation of all MDG projects.

The Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria continues to be a prime mechanism for addressing the 6th Millennium Development

Goal. Accordingly Nigeria will remain both a donor nation and a recipient of the Fund. Having actively participated during the first and second replenishments, Nigeria will make further contributions during the third replenishment as well as call for the Muskoka commitment to be met now, and the Global Fund to be expanded to include MDGs 4 and 5 in support of the UN Secretary General's Every Woman Every Child Initiative.

Mr. President,

Good governance, strict adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights remain fundamental tenets of my administration. The consolidation and safe-guarding of our democracy is a task on which we are beginning to see positive results. The smooth succession of power since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, including my own ascension to the presidency of our country, is evidence of the commitment of all stakeholders to democratic governance – in the knowledge that political stability is imperative for national development. As we celebrate our 50th independence anniversary in a few days, we remember the sacrifice of the founding fathers of our nation, as well as our own responsibility to present and future generations.

In fulfilment of these aspirations we are firmly committed to holding free, fair and credible elections during the next cycle of local, state and national elections. In this regard we have taken necessary steps to ensure

the success of the process. Mr President, I assure you that Every Vote Will Count.

We are also working to strengthen the institutional structures for combating corruption, financial crimes, and other vices like human and drug trafficking; we are reforming the financial sector to make it more accountable and transparent. This is to ensure that our country enjoys political stability, social harmony and economic growth.

In support of our commitment to the global efforts against terrorism, we continue to strengthen and expand our institutional capacities in tackling all forms of extremism. In fact, we currently have two bills - the Anti-Terrorism Bill and the Anti-Money Laundering Bill - before our National Assembly which I am confident will be passed into law before the end of this legislative year.

Mr. President,

Soon after I assumed the leadership of our country, I was invited by President Barrack Obama to a mini-summit on Nuclear Disarmament in Washington, DC. Like all previous Nigerian leaders, I share the American President's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, and I will continue to collaborate with him and all like-minded leaders for the realization of this laudable goal. Our support and active participation in the adoption of the

Pelindaba Treaty is evidence of our commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This conforms with our status as a signatory to major treaties on nuclear disarmament.

On the other hand, Small Arms and Light Weapons have destabilized the continent; fuelled and prolonged conflicts; and obstructed relief programmes. They have also undermined peace initiatives; increased human rights abuses; hampered development; and perhaps more worrisome, they have fostered a culture of organized crime and violence.

We however note that illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is not accorded commensurate attention. Nigeria calls on the United Nations to take firm action toward the control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons by adopting an Arms Trade Treaty.

It is estimated that 100 million pieces of these weapons are in sub-Saharan Africa alone. These have been identified as falling in the category of weapons that are actually killing more people in the African continent than have been killed by any other type of weapons. However, unlike nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, there are no global treaties or legally binding instruments for dealing with the challenges of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

In my capacity as Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I am pleased to report that we have made substantial progress in bringing peace and stability to countries in the Community that were until recently embroiled in political crises. This has greatly improved the situation across the sub-region, which in turn has enhanced peace and security that are critical for development. We will continue to build on these achievements to consolidate stability and engender prosperity in the sub-region.

Mr. President,

Nigeria chose the theme "Preventive Diplomacy" for its open debate during its Presidency of the Security Council last July to highlight the importance that it attaches to conflict prevention. It is obvious that prevention of conflicts is a cheaper option for maintaining peace and security than peacekeeping. I urge the United Nations to devote renewed attention to Preventive Diplomacy. The increasing financial burden of peacekeeping and high human cost of conflict are good reasons for the United Nations to pursue, with vigour, the adoption of preventive diplomacy in the spirit of the provisions of Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN Charter. For Nigeria, a major troop contributing country for peacekeeping operations, it

is essential that the rules of engagement be reviewed to prevent high casualty rate, among others.

Mr. President,

The theme of the 65th Session – Reaffirming the Central Role of the United Nations in Global Governance - is timely and appropriate. The need for the United Nations to provide leadership in addressing problems and challenges of a global nature is imperative. We urge the UN to quicken the pace of its reforms, not only to better reflect current global realities, but also to ensure that it enjoys genuine legitimacy.

The early reform and, in particular, expansion of the UN Security Council will accord the UN greater effectiveness. The exclusion of Africa from the permanent member category of the Security Council can no longer be justified.

Mr. President,

I would like to reaffirm Nigeria's abiding faith in the role of the United Nations to pursue our common goals for the benefit of all mankind. We therefore pledge our continued support for the Organization, in order to strengthen it as a way of identifying with the ideals for which it stands.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all member-states for their kind words of condolence and sympathy, as well as for the Special Session of the General Assembly, held in honour of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua last May. Even though he is gone, his legacy lives on as my Administration continues to implement many of the programmes we had jointly designed during his time as President of our country. May his soul rest in peace.

I thank you.