



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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ADDRESS

By

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PRESIDENT OF THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE
67TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA)

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**The President of the 67th Session of the
General Assembly,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
The Secretary-General Mr. Ban ki-Moon,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me start by congratulating you on your election as the President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly. I have no doubt that under your able leadership the work of the Session will progress to a successful conclusion. I also wish to acknowledge the excellent work of your predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz El-Nasser, who guided the affairs of the 66th Session with diligence and consummate skill.

I must seize this opportunity to applaud Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for the able manner in which he has continued to guide and lead the Secretariat of our Organisation.

When I addressed this august Assembly last year on the theme of “Conflict Mediation and Settlement of International Disputes by Peaceful Means”, the world was witnessing important and dramatic changes. The “Arab Spring” had broken out, setting new political standards and social contract between governments and the governed. South Sudan, today sitting at the family table of the United Nations, had also just gained independence.

Since then, we have witnessed considerable progress and also some setbacks. Knowing that the future remains uncertain and perilous, we have always believed that much more needed to be done to protect our gains, including developing new strategies for preventing and resolving conflicts.

The situation in Syria, which continues to weigh on the collective conscience of the world, is a case in point. Every day, since the conflict began, innocent people continue to lose their lives and livelihood, while tens of thousands of others flee into neighbouring countries seeking refuge.

I seize this opportunity to call on the Syrian people, in the face of seeming lack of concerted positive international action, to pause and find a solution to this crisis in a way that will benefit the Syrian nation.

Indeed, it was in the context of tackling the many crises that plagued our world that I proposed the establishment of a Conflict Mediation Commission (CMC), under the Secretary-General's office, to further strengthen the early warning and peace building initiatives of the United Nations. Experience elsewhere gives us reason to believe that there is value in the creation of this mechanism.

Nigeria stands ready to work with other countries to make the protection of innocent civilians caught in conflict situations a priority of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

I see a consonance between the theme of the 66th Session and that of and 67th Session on "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". Both are concerned with the peaceful settlement

of disputes. This consonance, in my view, is evidence of the United Nation's continuous and justifiable pre-occupation with issues of peace and security.

Membership of the Security Council in 2010-2011 afforded Nigeria an opportunity to work with others to promote the complex peace and security agenda of the United Nations. It was, indeed, a privilege for us to have contributed to UN and international efforts to make the world a safer place.

Nigeria and other emerging nations continue to demonstrate capacity to add value to the work of all the organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council. For this reason, we must now commit ourselves to accelerate the long overdue reforms of the Security Council. This will no doubt make the Council more equitable, more inclusive and more effective.

Nigeria believes that a reformed Security Council with expanded permanent membership will benefit from the unique experience and capacity that regional representatives could bring to bear on its work.

Mr. President,

It is a matter of great concern that many regions of the world, including the West African sub-region, are plagued by political crises and insurgency. In some parts of my own country, for instance, we are experiencing threats from extremist and militant activities, with quasi-terrorist tactics.

Our response to these has been multi-faceted, as we seek to address the root causes of these threats, exploring opportunities for dialogue, improving law enforcement to ensure public safety and security.

International cooperation has also been a key factor in tackling our security challenges. We have signed bilateral agreements with our neighbours Cameroon, Niger and Chad. On the multilateral front, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has been an excellent platform for cooperation. These efforts are aimed at safeguarding the security of our individual countries and denying extremists the use of our region as sanctuary.

We are confident that these measures will stem the flow and access to small arms and light weapons, which have indeed become Africa's weapons of mass destruction and the most potent source of instability.

Mr. President,

Nigeria continues to regard the General Assembly as a veritable platform for collective action to address issues of common interest to all nations. One such issue deserving the serious attention of the UN is the adoption of a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty.

I believe this important instrument could galvanise the international community to regulate the transfer of conventional weapons and curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. There is no doubt that the absence of a global consensus to control the flow of such weapons, including small arms and light weapons, is fuelling conflicts, constraining growth and development and increasing human rights violations.

A ray of hope was offered early this month with the successful conclusion of the 2nd Review Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, including the unprecedented adoption of an outcome document under Nigeria's Presidency. We expect that this positive achievement should impact on the entire disarmament process of the United Nations, including the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and other disarmament mechanisms.

Mr. President,

The correlation between disarmament, peace and security and development is axiomatic and self-evident. The work of the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children, which I have the honour to co-chair with His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway, recognises the need to save and improve the health of women and children for the benefit of the future progress of the world.

This is, indeed, a laudable achievement, for which we commend the vision of the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon.

The Commission's overarching objective is the provision of medical resources and other life-saving commodities in a more affordable, more accessible and timelier manner, thereby saving the lives of at least 4 million women and children worldwide by 2015 and helping to achieve the health-related goals of the MDGs.

Concerned with the unflattering statistics on maternal and child mortality in Nigeria, my Government has adopted measures for reversing this unhappy trend,

in close collaboration with the Commission and the related 'Every Woman Every Child Movement'.

We believe therefore, it is time that the world looked beyond 2015 to the post-MDG era. 2015 is not a destination but only a milestone on the long journey to a better, safer, healthier and more caring world. It is in this spirit that Nigeria will participate in the forthcoming inter-governmental process to consider the development of specific and action-oriented sustainable development goals (SDGs) beyond 2015.

Mr. President,

Sustainable development and progress are two ultimate aspirations of any nation which cannot be achieved without peace and security. Guided by this realisation, Nigeria had committed and shall continue to commit herself to the attainment of regional and international peace and security, more so in close collaboration with the UN, the African Union and ECOWAS. Of recent, however, our sub-region has suffered some setbacks in terms of unconstitutional change of government and the emergence of insurgency, among others.

In Mali, political crisis stemming from this reality has escalated to insurgency that is threatening the unity of the country. Nigeria and ECOWAS are working in concert to address this threat which has the potential to spill over into neighbouring countries and destabilise the entire region.

Guinea-Bissau is another flash point of instability in the sub-region in which Nigeria and ECOWAS are engaged. Indeed, the Contact Group, headed by Nigeria was set up by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS to help

establish a transitional government with a view to returning that country to political and constitutional order.

In furtherance of this objective, Nigeria provided the sum of 10 million US dollars to the Interim Government in Guinea-Bissau to assist in the stabilization of the country.

Mr. President,

The overall security situation in the West African sub-region should continue to be a matter of interest and concern to the rest of the international community. I believe I speak for many in this august Assembly when I state that West Africa can ill-afford renewed insurgency.

Although ECOWAS is taking measures to address the situation in Mali, particularly in the north, the urgent assistance of the United Nations and the support of other partners will be needed to build on recent gains to secure peace and stability in Mali and across the sub-region.

Mr. President,

Nigeria's long-standing commitment to the promotion of issues of particular concern to Africa is widely acknowledged. Nigeria has stood firm and played critical roles in all the recent developments in Africa. This includes the struggle for independence and self-determination, the fight against apartheid, colonialism and discrimination.

Today, we are in the vanguard of the fight against extremism, terrorism and all forms of mindless violence. We shall remain undeterred and unflinching in our resolve to protect our citizens and other persons living within our borders and to extend such protection wherever we can to other countries in our region. We know that no country has unilaterally defeated the dark forces of violence and terrorism. This is evidently an endeavour that requires international collaboration. We therefore call upon the international community and all like-minded stakeholders to address this matter with all the seriousness that it deserves.

Mr. President,

I cannot end my statement without alluding to the importance of the support that Nigeria shall continue to give to the United Nations in not only advancing but also upholding international peace and security. We shall strengthen and deepen our cooperation with the United Nations in the areas of peacekeeping operations around the world. We shall remain focused and committed to ensuring meaningful and effective contribution to present, and if need be, future Peacekeeping operations particularly in Africa.

Mr. President,

Events of recent weeks have demonstrated how increasingly interconnected our world has become, and the extent to which one incident in one part can cause reverberations in others. The lesson is that freedom of expression should not constitute the licence to incitement. The freedom that we all hold dear and true should be exercised wisely and cautiously. Freedom of expression and religious

tolerance must not be mutually exclusive but should be complimentary to each other.

We eschew violence and deplore the needless losses of lives and destruction of property. We condemn the deliberate denigration of religious and cultural beliefs and sensitivities which in turn lead to counter reactions.

Mr. President,

As the world grows in knowledge and prosperity, so must humankind grow in maturity and wisdom. Care and compassion for our fellow beings must inform all our actions. We must ensure that no nation and no part of the world is left behind in terms of human progress.

Working together with commitment and common purpose, we can succeed in building an inclusive, safer and prosperous world for present and future generations. The United Nations must lead this effort with renewed commitment.

I thank you.