



STATEMENT DELIVERED

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, MUHAMMADU BUHARI,

PRESIDENT OF FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT

**THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 73RD SESSION OF
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN NEW YORK,**

25TH SEPTEMBER, 2018

Madam President,

Fellow Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I congratulate you, Madam President, on your well-deserved election as President of the 73rd General Assembly. As you embark on your assignment, I would like to assure you of Nigeria's support in no less measure than that which we extended to your illustrious predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák.

2. We appreciate the effective leadership he gave the 72nd Assembly with such dedication, commitment, and fairness to all member states. I also salute our distinguished Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, who steered the affairs of the Secretariat with focused commitment to the collective United Nations pursuit of global peace and security, equity and justice, inclusiveness, women's empowerment and human rights.

3. It is appropriate at this point to remember with deep sadness our late 7th Secretary- General Mr. Kofi Annan who passed away on the eve of his 82nd birthday. Kofi's significant contributions to the work of our Organisation have been acknowledged in the well deserved tributes that poured in from around the world following his death.

4. We in Africa, while mourning the loss of this great son of ours and citizen of the world, take pride in the way he served humanity in a truly exemplary manner. He demonstrated, in his calm but determined manner, the virtues of compassion, dedication to the cause of justice, fairness and human rights. He was a visionary leader who inspired hope even in the face of the most daunting challenges. He devoted his entire life's career to the UN and the pursuit of its ideals and goals. The world is indeed a better place thanks to his exemplary service.

Madam President,

5. During the past year, the world saw some positive results and encouraging signs from the bilateral and multilateral efforts of the international community to address conflicts, crises and threats to world peace. We particularly commend the efforts of the leaders of the United States, North Korea, and South Korea, to realise our shared goal of a nuclear free Korean Peninsula.

6. In this connection, we acknowledge the commitment to peace shown by President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-Un by initiating a historic Summit. We urge that they continue this positive engagement.

7. Regrettably, many of the crises and threats to peace and security around the world which we debated last year as we did over several previous years remain unresolved. In some cases, matters got worse. The continuing plight of the Rohingyas in Myanmar, the protracted Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the wars in Yemen, and Syria, and the fight against international and local terrorism such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab come to mind.

8. The terrorist insurgencies we face, particularly in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, are partly fuelled by local factors and dynamics, but now increasingly by the international Jihadi Movement, runaway fighters from Iraq and Syria and arms from the disintegration of Libya.

9. In Myanmar, the carnage appears to have thankfully abated somewhat. We commend the United Nations for staying focussed on the situation of the Rohingya people, to bring their suffering to an end, and hold to account the perpetrators of the atrocious crimes committed against innocent and vulnerable members of this community, including women, children and the old.

10. The international community should strengthen its resolve to combat ethnic and religious cleansing everywhere. We support the UN's efforts in ensuring that the Rohingya refugees are allowed to return to their homes in Myanmar with security, protection, and guarantee of citizenship. We note the indication by the Government of Myanmar of its willingness to address these issues and we encourage them to do so expeditiously.

11. In this context, Nigeria commends the Government and people of Bangladesh in particular and all other countries and organizations that have contributed to shouldering the burden of providing shelter and other vital assistance to the Rohingya Refugees.

12. The carnage and the worsening humanitarian situations in Syria and Yemen continue unabated. But the international community cannot afford to give up on the Syrian and Yemeni people. We must pursue all efforts to find peaceful negotiated political solutions to these wars which cannot be won by force of arms alone. Regarding Syria, we hope that the UN sponsored Geneva process and the Sochi initiative, led by Russia, Iran, and Turkey advance this objective.

13. The International community must keep up the pressure to encourage the parties to pursue the path of dialogue, negotiations and inclusiveness in resolving their sectarian divides and bringing to an end the immense human suffering in Syria as well as Yemen. We commend Turkey, Jordan, Greece, Germany, Italy and France for hosting the millions of the refugees fleeing these brutal conflicts.

14. The situation in the Middle East, grave as it has always been, is now worsened by developments since our last meeting. Nigeria continues to call on the Israelis and the Palestinians to make the necessary compromises in the interest of justice, peace and security, in line with our numerous UN resolutions and applicable international laws.

15. Unilateral, arbitrary and insensitive actions only prolong the conflict and undermine world peace and security. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza is an appalling result of unrestrained use of power. We urge both parties to re-engage in dialogue on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Quartet Roadmap and the Arab Peace Initiative, among others.

16. Nigeria reaffirms its unwavering support for a just two-state solution, negotiated without intimidation and with Israel and Palestine existing side-by-side in peace and security.

17. The crises in the Middle East have deep roots and have remained unresolved for too long. Yet, we should not fall into self-defeating despair and conclude that they are not amenable to solution.

18. We should draw inspiration from the remarkable leadership that got Ethiopia and Eritrea to restore long-lost hope for peace between them, a remarkable show of statesmanship which has now galvanised neighbouring countries, including Djibouti and Somalia to push for peace in the sub-region. I believe that with hard work, commitment, and a disposition to compromise and necessary sacrifices, peace is achievable in the Middle East as well.

19. Most crises usually have a variety of festering causes and effects. It is the failure to address them early and effectively that lead to out-of-control conflicts. Addressing them includes national and international collective actions which positively impact on peoples and communities. Hence, 'Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and sustainable Societies' which is the theme for this year's General Assembly, is very apt indeed.

Madam President,

20. A topical consequence of the current conflicts around the world is the irregular migration of affected people from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Africa to Europe. Irregular migration entails huge avoidable loss of human lives, puts strains on services in host countries and communities, and fuels anti-immigrant and racist sentiments in Europe. That is why we welcome the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the first-ever Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and we look forward to its adoption in Marrakech later this year. The aim is to protect the rights of migrants worldwide, while addressing the concerns of countries of 'origin', 'transit', or 'destination' alike.

21. Migration is a constant in human affairs. We in Africa are grateful to countries who treat migrants with compassion and humanity—notably Germany, Italy and France.

22. Irregular migration is not a consequence of conflicts alone, but of the effects of climate change and lack of opportunities at home. Climate Change remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. Very close to us at home, it is our lot in Nigeria, together with our neighbours around the Chad Basin, to live with the Climate change

consequences of a drastically shrunk Lake Chad and the parching up of otherwise fertile arable lands.

23. The Lake was a major source of livelihood to more than 45 million inhabitants of the region. Its shrinking meant loss of livelihoods and they are now rendered poor and vulnerable to the activities of extremists and terrorist groups. The instability thus caused in the sub-region intensified internal displacements leading, among other consequences, to intense economic competition especially between farmers and herdsmen.

24. This is why we continue to call for a rededicated international engagement to accelerate the recovery efforts in the Lake Chad Basin to address the root causes of the conflicts in the region. What is required is continuous and robust UN cooperation with national Governments and sub-regional and regional organisations such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union, to enhance capacity in conflict prevention, conflict management and peace building.

25. With regard to the Lake Chad Basin plight, I extend our heartfelt appreciation to the United Nations, the Governments of Germany, Norway, the United States, Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and a host of other development partners for their laudable support in assisting us to address both the humanitarian challenges and the on-going stabilisation drive in the region.

Madam President,

26. Corruption within countries and illicit flow of funds across national boundaries have huge negative impact on the stability, peace, and economic prospects of millions in developing countries. Corruption significantly deprives national Governments of resources to provide meaningful livelihoods to their populations who are predominantly youths, thus giving rise to more irregular migration.

27. The fight against corruption, therefore, involves us all. It is in our collective interest to cooperate in tracking illicit financial flows, investigate and prosecute corrupt individuals and entities and repatriate such funds to their countries of origin.

28. Fighting corruption or resolving international conflicts, crises and wars; defeating terrorism and piracy; curbing arms trafficking and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons which fuel these conflicts, particularly in Africa; stemming irregular migration by addressing its root causes; and the many other global challenges we are faced with today can only be effectively addressed through multilateral cooperation and concerted action.

29. The only global institutional framework we have to address these challenges is the United Nations System. That is why we continue to call for the strengthening of the Organisation and making it more effective by speeding up the pace of progress towards its reform, including that of its principal organ, the Security Council. The reconstitution of the Council to make it more equitable and more representative of our global community is both a political and moral imperative.

30. We believe that a reformed Security Council with expanded membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, is in accord with prevailing international consensus and it is in our collective interest to do so. It is high time we stop skirting round the issue and establish achievable benchmarks and time frames for these reforms.

31. I assure you all that in this advocacy, I am only reflecting Nigeria's deep and abiding commitment to our Organisation and its founding principles and goals. From the date we joined in 1960, we have contributed our quota to the fulfilment of the mandate of the UN. We have been active participants in many Security Council and African Union authorised Peace Keeping operations around the world, beginning with the Democratic Republic of Congo operations in 1960.

32. Furthermore, Nigeria has always mobilised the required human and material resources to achieve set United Nations goals, including the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are resolute in complementing the efforts and examples of the United Nations to promote gender equality and youth empowerment as necessary pillars for sustainable development.

33. Without these, there can be neither enduring peace nor security. As we set and implement our national policies to achieve these goals, we, in the spirit of international solidarity, will readily cooperate with other nations seeking to achieve similar goals for their own populations to help ensure that no one is left behind.

34. I thank you all for your attention.