



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

By

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PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

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AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

60' SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, GCFR
President, Federal Republic of Nigeria
Chairman, African Union
At the
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United Nations General Assembly, New York
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Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria and in my capacity as the current Chairman of the African Union, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, and your country Sweden, on your election as President of the Sixtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I should also commend you for the leadership you provided at the High Level Plenary Meeting over the last three days. The theme you have chosen for this year's General Debate: "For a Stronger and More Effective United Nations: The Follow-up and Implementation of the High level Meetings in September 2005", is indeed most appropriate and timely, as it encapsulates our common desire for a renewed and invigorated organization. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation. I would also like to express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Jean Ping of the Republic of Gabon for his leadership and dedication.

I commend the Secretary General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for his tenacity and leadership qualities in the sustenance of the role of the United Nations which underlines the current reform process of the United Nations system.

Mr. President, you have assumed the Presidency of the 60th Session at a time when the United Nations is witnessing epoch making historic events. The session has in the last three days taken the assessment and review of the five-year implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Besides pursuing the reform process, launched by the report of the Secretary General's Panel entitled **A** More Secure World; Our Shared Responsibility and the Secretary General's own report entitled In Larger Freedom, the Session will also mark the 10th year of implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development held in Beijing and Copenhagen respectively. I have no doubt that with your vast experience in diplomacy and statecraft, you will pilot the Session to a successful conclusion.

The United Nations continues to play a pivotal role in the lives of all people with its vast network of activities. In this regard, Nigeria is firmly anchored in its belief, commitment to, and support for the strengthening of the United Nations and the protection of its ideals, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security, prevention and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promotion of international cooperation in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

There remains so much to do in those areas that only a rejuvenated United Nations can optionally respond to the challenges.

Mr. President, last year, the situation in the Sudan including the Darfur region was a cause of serious concern to Africa and indeed to the international community. However, with the combined efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD),

we have managed to usher in an era of hope in that country. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been signed and implemented on the long drawn north-south conflict, and the fifth round of Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur resumed in Abuja in June 2005 and is currently in progress. I take this opportunity, to once again, appeal to the parties to shed their hard-line approach to negotiation and adopt a policy of give-and-take in the interest of posterity.

The international community has demonstrated tremendous goodwill in facilitating the peace process in Darfur, and this must be sustained by the parties. Similarly, it is equally important to maintain and sustain the current level of peace between the Northern and Southern Sudan. In this connection, I salute the courage of the late Mr. John Garang in leading the Southern Sudanese People into reaching an accord with the Government of the Sudan. We regret the death of Mr. John Garang and extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family, the government and people of the Sudan.

The situation in Somalia continues to give hope to the ability of the contending parties to resolve their differences in the higher interest of their beloved country. The African Union will continue to play an active role in this regard, together with the IGAD and countries in the region to help Somalis realize their dream of a united and peaceful country.

In the West African sub-region, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have continued to remain fully engaged with efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. In this connection, we acknowledge the valuable support of the United Nations to the peace process. We appreciate the efforts deployed by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to mediate in Cote d'Ivoire on behalf of the AU. In view of President Mbeki's Report of 30th August 2005 and the recent declaration that the elections scheduled for October may not take place, it would be necessary for ECOWAS and then the AU to revisit the situation in Cote d'Ivoire. We will do so in full consultation with the Secretary-General and the Security Council of the UN.

We commend the evolving return to democracy, reconciliation, security and development in Togo and we appreciate the efforts of the UN, EU and other development partners in this regard. The elections in Guinea Bissau have come and gone. The reconciliation process that would precede the inauguration of the newly elected President has begun. Both Togo and Guinea Bissau would need substantial support to rebuild their economy without which their situations could deteriorate. We call on the UN and its institutions, along with the EU and other development partners to help.

The AU stands resolutely on its policy of not accepting to sit amongst its members any government that emanates outside the constitution and democratic processes and that is

the situation now in Mauritania. We of course maintain constructive dialogue advising expeditious return to democracy, with national reconciliation and necessary reforms and legislation to move the country forward.

We welcome the elections in Burundi and the government emanating from that election which is based on the newly agreed constitution. We appreciate all friends of Burundi who have helped to make this happen. Like Togo and Guinea Bissau, Burundi will need special assistance to be able to consolidate its reconciliation and democracy.

We applaud the Secretary-General's proposal contained in his recent Report on the situation in Sierra Leone and in particular, his intention to keep the security, political, humanitarian and human rights situation under close review. The AU is equally pleased with the extension for six months, of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the recognition of the need for a strong United Nations presence in the country after the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. We believe the presence of the UN systems will foster confidence and guarantee stability during the critical months following the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. We call upon the international community to continue to extend assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in its efforts to develop a credible, effective and sustainable police force, armed forces and judiciary as well as rebuild damaged infrastructure necessary to revamp economic and social activities.

The peace process in Liberia is at its most critical phase and calls for the cooperation of all parties in the country. The AU is closely monitoring developments there and we are optimistic that the elections scheduled for next month would lead to a successful transition. In this connection, the diversion of attention through propaganda on issues unrelated to the conduct of the forthcoming Presidential elections should be avoided and resisted.

It is pertinent here for me to repeat what I said before on the issue of Charles Taylor who was encouraged to leave Liberia to avoid bloodbath. He was encouraged by the leaders of Africa at ECOWAS and AU levels to voluntarily give up power and leave his country in the interest of Liberia, West Africa, Africa and world peace and security. He was escorted to Nigeria by President Kuffor as the then Chairman of ECOWAS and Presidents Mbeki and Chissano as outgoing and incoming chairs of AU respectively. We believe that the cause of peace in Liberia will be served if Charles Taylor keeps away or he is kept away from Liberia during the transition or early stage of nation-rebuilding of Liberia after the elections.

Mr. President, in the Great Lakes region, we took note of the realistic decision of the two houses of Parliament in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to extend for a period of six months the transition period that expired on 30 June 2005, in accordance with the provisions of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement signed in Pretoria on December 2002 and in line with article 196 of the Transitional Constitution. The AU is determined to continue to work with the United Nations to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict and in this connection reiterates its call on all parties to the conflict in the DRC to respect this decision. We hope that this will ensure that the elections provided for by the Agreement take place satisfactorily. With the cooperation of all parties concerned and the active support of the international community, we are hopeful of an orderly return to normality and the restoration of peace and stability to the DRC.

Mr. President, Nigeria's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation has never been in doubt. We have always supported the view that it should involve all states. Disarmament Conventions merit the support of all states, small or large, nuclear or non-nuclear. My delegation regrets the failure of the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. We should not allow the relative stability in our world to lure us to the belief that the need for total disarmament no longer exists; nor can we separate disarmament from non-proliferation. Through this, we can achieve the goal of the UN Charter of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and destruction.

The availability and wide circulation of small arms and light weapons pose the greatest danger to peace and security especially in our region. These weapons have helped to prolong conflicts, undermined stability, social peace and security and have wrought devastation on the economies of affected states. Nigeria, therefore, welcomes the agreement, in June 2005, on an international instrument that would enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. This is, however, only a stopgap measure. What we need is a legally binding international instrument that will regulate, control and monitor the illicit trade in small arms, including their transfer to non-state actors. By pronouncing ourselves clearly and positively in that direction, Member States would send a message of their resolve not to encourage or condone the diversion of these weapons to illicit networks.

Mr. President, terrorism remains a great threat to peace and security at local, national and international levels. It is inimical to the rule of law, human rights, democracy and freedom; it impedes sustainable development through destabilization of states, particularly emerging democracies and nations in transition. Nigeria reaffirms its conviction that terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstance and should therefore be combated in all its forms and manifestations. To this end, my country welcomes the adoption on 13th April 2005, of the International Convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and commits itself to work with others to mobilize the political will necessary to ensure the early coming into force of the Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism. We also welcome the UN Security Council Resolution against Incitement of Terrorism and terrorist acts.

Mr. President, in the last three days, we have reviewed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and what we found is that the challenges of hunger, poverty, and disease continue to override our conscience as well as the conscience of the international community. It was our concern on these challenges that compelled African leaders to commit themselves to the ideals of New Partnership for African's Development (NEPAD) whose principal objective was to encourage good governance, democracy, rule of law, security, stability and macro-economic reforms among others. Four years on, NEPAD has made some modest progress that reflects our determination to make Africa work for Africans in an interdependent world and towards the achievement of sustainable development. NEPAD has continued to work effectively with regional economic communities to build African capacities, attract technical support for development efforts and invest actively in feasibility studies for projects designed to change the configuration of Africa for the better. In addition to establishing a fund to generate resources internally for infrastructural development, NEPAD is also building positive relationships with important stakeholders within and beyond Africa. We have established symbiotic relationships

among the ADB, AU Commission, NEPAD Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities and donor and development agencies. I therefore urge this august Assembly, to continue its support for all initiatives of NEPAD.

However, notwithstanding our efforts, poverty remains endemic in Africa. The dangerous correlation between grinding poverty and alienation from government as a veritable source of political instability in the continent leaves much to be desired. We are however grateful for the renewed commitment of our development partners to redeem their pledges in ODA, increase foreign direct investment, remodel trading architecture, and provide better and effective technical and structural support to our efforts. We have also begun to emphasise well managed and development focused tourism as a veritable source of wealth and job creation and an effective contributor to several of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs).

We remain committed to providing the necessary conducive environment that will encourage investment and generate wealth and liberate our peoples from poverty. Our agricultural policies and practices are tailored to expansion capable of feeding our people, exporting some of the produce and providing raw materials for our industries. We are investing in new technology and improved seedlings, combating drought, exchanging information on best practices and seeking external markets for our products.

The pivotal role of trade as a veritable engine for economic growth cannot be overstated. Access to markets of developed countries, withdrawal of agricultural subsidies as well as elimination of distorting tariffs are measures that should be addressed decisively by our industrialized development partners to enhance the ability of developing countries to benefit from trade. The successful completion of the Doha multilateral trade negotiations would be a litmus test of our resolve. As clearly demonstrated in the past days, it is important to provide market access for goods and services from developing countries, as well as ensure special and differentiated treatment and the enhancement of the productive capacities of developing countries to enable them compete favourably in the global market.

I wish to recognize the statesmanship displayed by members of the Paris Club which recently granted African countries, among others, debt cancellation and debt relief. We urge the international community to adopt an effective, comprehensive, durable and development oriented solution to the debt problem of developing countries, which has become for them a cog in the wheel of development, growth and progress.

Since 1986 the AIDS epidemic has rapidly grown into a monster all over the world. In tackling the scourge, many African countries, including Nigeria, have adopted the multi-sectoral response strategy recommended by the United Nations. We have completed the review of our own National Response to HIV/AIDS for the period 2001-2004 as well as the development of a new National Strategic Framework (2005-2009).

Mr. President, Nigeria has followed with great interest and participated actively in the various proposals on the reform of our Organization- the United Nations. We strongly support the proposal for the establishment of a Peace Building Commission since this will

go a long way in filling a yawning gap in the consolidation of sustainable peace and security in post-conflict countries, particularly in Africa.

We also support the proposed Human Rights Council. However, we do not believe that the mere exchange of the Human Rights Commission with the proposed **Council would** address perceived deficiencies in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, unless the proposed Council will adopt a new culture of treating all cases of violation with a standard yardstick capable of attracting wide support and generating confidence.

As far as the proposal for the expansion of the Security Council is concerned, Nigeria has consistently remained faithful to, and as part of the AU Follow-up Mechanism, the implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus. We have done so without any second thought, nor national colorations with the sole aim of achieving the best for Africa in the obligatory negotiations with other regions and members of the United Nations whose support Africa must necessarily attract to achieve its fundamental requirement of increasing the number and quality of its membership in the Security Council.

Finally, Mr. President, as Chairman of the African Union for the past year, I have had the privilege of working closely with brother African Heads of State in transforming the African Union into a truly potent and effective organization for the development of African peoples. Through our collective efforts, we have brought hope and confidence to Africa. We do not, under any circumstances, intend to waver in this renewed commitment of repositioning Africa for peace, security, stability, growth, sustainable development and enduring democracy. I am optimistic that with the invaluable cooperation of the United Nations, our development partners and the international community on the MDGs and other NEPAD initiatives, the African Union will succeed on the noble objectives enshrined in its Constitutive Act.

I thank you.