



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN,
GCFR,**

PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS

NEW YORK, 8 JUNE 2011

Mr. President,

I wish to join other delegations in congratulating you for convening this important meeting. I also would like to commend the Secretary-General for his far-reaching report, which contains important recommendations for achieving our objective of a world free of HIV and AIDS. The important statements by the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Mr. Michel Sidibe, and the highly respected former President of Botswana, His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, also provide great insight into the challenges that lie ahead. The participation of various stakeholders such as youth, women, the private sector and people living with HIV are particularly welcome and crucial to our collective endeavour.

Mr. President,

The *“Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS”* of 2001 and the follow-up *“Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS”* of 2006 marked the determination of the international community to wage a global and sustained war on HIV and AIDS. Since then, substantial progress has been made, thanks to our collective determination, to the extent that HIV is now better understood, and AIDS is no longer an automatic death sentence. Yet, a lot remains to be done.

Today, we again stand on the doorsteps of history, with an opportunity to build on the gains of the past ten years. We must not miss this chance, which could be the last great one on the road to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

My continent, Africa, has borne and continues to bear a disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS. But we have not just been bemoaning our fate.

In April 2001, African leaders, in a declaration adopted in Abuja, committed to allocating 15% of their national budgets to accelerating action toward universal access to HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria services. This was followed in 2006 by the Maputo Plan of Action, which seeks to create a partnership of governments, civil society, private sector, and development partners for the operationalisation of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights.

The AU also adopted in 2006 the Continental Framework for Harmonisation of Approaches Among Member States and the Integration of Policies on Human Rights and People Infected by HIV and AIDS.

All these efforts are aimed at a sustained, coordinated and resolute continental action to stop new infections, maximize efficiency in the delivery of treatment, care and support, and achieving sustainable financing for the HIV response.

In my country, HIV/AIDS services are currently the most rapidly expanding health interventions, and the multi-sectoral approach to the response has also generated better resource mobilization and coordination of the many stakeholders – public, private and the civil society.

Some of the successes, of which we are particularly proud, include the Youth Leadership in AIDS programme embedded in our National Youth Service Corps Scheme, the strategic engagement of the media and Nigeria's buoyant film industry in promoting behavior change and awareness; and the Annual Award for Excellence in HIV/AIDS Programming for journalists reporting on HIV/AIDS and related diseases.

In addition, a bill is presently before the National Assembly, our federal parliament, which seeks to address the specific issues of stigmatization and discrimination directed at people living with HIV. As soon as legislative processes are complete, I will promptly sign this bill into law.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding these modest achievements, many challenges remain, principal of which is the burden of providing Anti-Retroviral Therapy to 1.5 million people living with HIV. Prevention also remains a major concern, as there is still relatively low access to Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission services in rural areas. Of course, stigmatization and discrimination are huge challenges, both of which pose barriers to universal access to services. Furthermore, national ownership and sustainability of response continue to be undermined by funding gaps.

We remain committed nonetheless. My Administration is determined to provide new impetus to the HIV/AIDS response by integrating the health sector into our human development agenda. For instance, from now until 2015, government will lead and coordinate the multi-sectoral implementation of our National Strategic Framework and Plan for HIV/AIDS.

In respect of universal access, our target is to increase government funding from 7% to 50% by 2015. We also aim to increase investment in procurement and supply chain management systems to ensure availability of quality HIV/AIDS commodities at all levels of care.

We are targeting the elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV by 2015. We will also work with the National Assembly for the allocation of at least 15% of the federal

budget for the health sector, as agreed in the Abuja Declaration. We believe that these and other initiatives would greatly contribute to achieving the joint objectives of the MDGs and the elimination of new HIV infections, including AIDS-related deaths by 2015.

Mr. President,

This is not the time to take our eyes off our target. The international community must retain the resolve and focus in the Declarations of 2001 and 2006, if the gains of the last 10 years are not to be eroded.

The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, as well as the input to this meeting from civil society, the youth and other stakeholders, should provide useful pointers in assisting us to plan the way forward. The declaration that will be issued at the end of our meeting should rightly include realistic modalities for reaching the noble goals we set for ourselves 10 years ago.

To say that adequate funding is critical to the success of our HIV and AIDS response is an understatement. Many countries, including mine, can neither achieve the targets we have set for ourselves ten year ago, nor the MDGs, without the support of our development partners. While appreciating their assistance, I like to seize this opportunity to urge them to make every effort to redeem their promises in view of the proximity of 2015.

We cannot win the fight against the HIV/AIDS scourge without international solidarity.

I thank you.