

**STATEMENT BY DR. B. N. OLORUNFEMI, FNMGS
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AT THE
OPENING SESSION OF THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
18TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the great honour to address the High Level Segment of this 18th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. We align ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Considerable efforts have been made over the last 2-3 decades particularly since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and the Johannesburg Summit 2002. But a lot still remains to be done. There is still high level of poverty in developing countries. The problem of climate change is now staring us on the face. We are still faced with the problems of biodiversity loss, land degradation, desertification, industrial, air and water pollution. We are also facing the problem of illegal movement of hazardous wastes generated in some parts of the earth and being dumped in another part of the same earth with enormous implications on human health and the environment.

As we deliberate on the thematic issues before us at this session, we should not lose sight of all the important global agreements and decisions reached so far at various fora to protect human health and the environment. We should examine critically how we have fared as members of the global community to advance the course of sustainable development. It is our hope that as we prepare for the review of MDGs in September this year and the Rio+ 20 in 2012, we should identify gaps, weakness and the way forward to ensuring that the earth remains a safe place for us and the generations coming after us. The thematic issues before us at this 18th Session are critical for achieving sustainable development.

On transportation, the Government of Nigeria has embarked on a bold project of integrating all sectors of her transport systems consisting of 198,000km of road; 3,500km of rail, 8,600km of inland waterways and about 22 airports. Government is currently implementing policies on transport that are geared towards accessibility of the citizenry to efficient and effective transportation facilities. The instrument in use is the Intra-Modal System of transportation that provides for effective linkage between the various modes of transportation.

Nigeria, Mr. Chairman, is currently championing through ECOWAS and West Africa Road Safety Organization (WARSO), the establishment of lead Road Safety Agency across the West African Sub-Region for full implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety (2011-2020).

We have commenced the process of adopting the best practices of Bus Rapid Transportation (BRT) and this has been successfully launched in the Lagos metropolis. We are equally involved in regional collaboration for sustainable transport management through the West African Road Safety Organisation (WARSO) and participation in the Trans-African Highway Project.

On Chemicals Management, Nigeria observes that sound management of chemicals is integral to sustainable development. It is a requirement for the protection of human health and the environment. Nigeria is therefore fully committed to the implementation of the various Chemicals Multilateral Agreements, including other Global Initiatives like the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS). We have established legislative and institutional framework, while strengthening national capacities of the public and private sectors on sound management of chemicals from “cradle to grave”. The application of life-cycle approaches of chemicals management should be given high ranking in view of its importance in ensuring the goals of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman, Nigeria is committed to the development of comprehensive risk management strategies aimed at pollution prevention and risk elimination; strengthening of national strategies for prevention, detection and control of

illegal traffic in hazardous chemicals; substitution of toxic chemicals with less harmful alternatives; promotion of more environment-friendly practices by industries; and sustained public awareness campaigns and education on chemicals handling.

Nigeria like many other developing countries faces the perennial problem of waste management. This has given her a very serious challenge in spite of the huge investment in that sector. The challenge is further compounded by rapid population growth in many of the Nigerian cities where wastes are generated faster than their collection, transportation and disposal.

Nigeria takes the issue of e-waste seriously. The developing countries including Nigeria have become the dumping ground for near-end of life and end-of-life electrical, electronic equipment and materials. This informed the decision of Nigeria to host the International Conference on E-waste Control in Abuja in July, 2009. The Communiqué of the Conference called the “Abuja Platform on E-Waste” contains far-reaching recommendations to address the issue of e-waste, particularly in developing countries. Very recently, Nigeria intercepted and impounded a shipload of e-waste and ensured its return to the port of origin to demonstrate our commitment to preventing in-flow of e-waste into the country.

We will continue to intensify efforts on the Toxic Waste-Dump-Watch Programme through in-country collaboration as well as at sub-regional and regional levels to put in place adequate checks and eradication of trans-boundary movement of wastes. In furtherance to our resolve, Nigeria is participating in a seaport inspection month in June 2010, coordinated by the Seaport Environmental Security Network (SESN) involving other countries at the sub regional level.

Nigeria supports the view expressed by the Secretary General in his report on sustainable production and consumption patterns regarding the necessity for complementary regulatory and market-based measures. We believe that such measures can create the required incentive to change business models and align resource use and resource costs. We also believe that sustainability principles

must be entrenched in such business models. Global efforts to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns will be more meaningful only when those who produce more and consume more are able to do more to address the emerging issues. Nigeria will continue to intensify efforts at the country level to ensure sustainable production and consumption. We shall also support efforts and initiatives as well as partner with the international community on projects and programmes at the regional and sub-regional levels to address the issues.

I would like to inform that the Government of Nigeria is presently restructuring her mining industry to comply with national and global aspirations for sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman, the areas of challenges that are common to all the thematic areas, include principally: inadequate funding, inadequate skilled manpower and technology, problems in translating policies to implementation, and socio-cultural factors relating to multi-lingual and indigenous issues among others.

In conclusion, the developing countries need to put in place a model for sustainable development through effective networking, to ensure that those issues and problems identified are effectively addressed.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.