

**INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE AFRICAN COMMON POSITION
ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE DELIVERED
AT THE 11th UN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE, BANGKOK, 18-25 APRIL 2005**

**DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
MINISTER OF JUSTICE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

Mr. President,

It is a singular honour for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Allow me, to express, on behalf of the African Union, our appreciation to the Government of Thailand for the hospitality and warm reception extended to all delegations and for the excellent facilities put in place to ensure the success of the Congress.

It would be recalled that at the opening plenary of the Eleventh Congress, the African Group had indicated that Africa has a Common Position on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. On behalf of the current Chairperson of the African Union, I have the honour to present the African Common Position.

The African Common Position is a culmination of efforts aimed at providing this Eleventh Congress a collective input of all the 53 Member-States of the African Union, which was adopted at the African Ministerial Conference on Drug Control in Africa in

Mauritius, from 14 to 17 December 2004, and endorsed by the Assembly of African Union Heads of States and Government in January 2005, in Abuja, Nigeria.

The African Common Position expresses deep concern that crime and armed conflicts generally constitute major obstacles to development, good quality of life, security of life and property, as well as democracy, proper management of public affairs, the rule of law and full enjoyment of human rights. It recognizes that transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, human and firearms trafficking, and smuggling of migrants, terrorism, corruption, economic and financial crimes, including money laundering, and cyber crime, severely hamper sustainable socio-economic developments, perpetuate inequality, lowers productivity, reduces efficiency and effectiveness, and undermines the integrity of the social, economic, cultural and political order.

The African Union considers the ratification and the effective implementation of the Transnational Organized Crimes Convention and its three protocols as central to combating organized crimes. In the Common Position, African countries express their commitment to plan and design national crime prevention and criminal justice policies within the overall socio-economic policy and legislative context, and to ensure effective capacity building for the national law enforcement, prosecutorial, judicial and custodial components of the criminal justice systems.

At the sub-regional and regional levels, establishes inter-ministerial mechanisms to monitor the incidents of crime, collect and analyze data, and coordinate efforts to prevent and combat them.

The Common Position creates an African Crime and Criminal Justice Information Network, under the auspices of the African Union Commission, as the core of Pan-African crime prevention and criminal justice activities and programmes.

Similarly, the Common Position establishes African Regional Centre for the Prevention and Eradication of Illicit Firearms Trafficking (the Regional Firearms Centre) to serve as a regional focal center for effective promotion of cooperation, collaboration and coordination, as well as to facilitate the collection and exchange of information, and harmonization of the relevant legislation.

On corruption, African Common Position makes extensive reference to the African Convention against Corruption and welcomes the UN Convention against Corruption as the first global instrument in the fight against corruption. It also welcomes the Asset Recovery provisions of the Convention and stressed the imperative of returning all proceeds of corruption belonging to the state to their countries of origin.

As part of our reaffirmation at fighting corruption, the African Common Position establishes the Advisory Board on Corruption, which shall collect and document information on the nature and scope of corruption and related offences in Africa, develop methodologies for analyzing the nature and extent of corruption in Africa, and disseminate information and sensitize the public on the negative effects of corruption and related offences.

The African Common Position condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, expresses support for the conclusion of the draft Comprehensive Convention against terrorism and calls for the ratification and implementation of all relevant international instruments related to terrorism. It requests the international community to provide technical assistance to African countries for the ratification and implementation of these international instruments.

In addition, the African Common Position stresses the imperative need to implement the African Union Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. In this regard, the AU welcomes the establishment and launching of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, in Algiers, Algeria, as a novel achievement in Africa's collective efforts to outlaw and eradicate the scourge of terrorism from the Continent. It appeals to Africa's partners, including international organizations, agencies, institutions and similar Centres around the world to provide support to the Centre and establish networks for information sharing, training, research and investigative and joint activities.