



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON AGENDA ITEM 56: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 14, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly presents us with yet another opportunity to share experiences and identify areas of progress as well as the challenges confronting women in the search for their empowerment and equality, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We commend the Secretary-General for his various reports on this agenda item.

My delegation recalls the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in China in 1995, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century and the 2000 Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals. These are a reaffirmation of the commitments of the international community to the goals of equality, development and peace for all women. They also represent a concerted effort to advance the global, regional and national agenda for the empowerment of women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria continues to uphold the implementation of the various international instruments on gender equality and women advancement, particularly, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special Session of the General Assembly that ushered in international efforts for the advancement of women. The implementation of some aspects of the Millennium Declaration has been a remarkable experience in Nigeria. However, while incremental progress has been recorded in some areas, there are monumental challenges in others.

The enabling environment created by the democratic governance in Nigeria has given rise to a vibrant civil society that promotes and protects the rights of women and girls. It has also contributed to the enhancement of freedom from all forms of discrimination. Some significant measures taken by government in this direction include the design and implementation of programmes and activities aimed at challenging existing structures and systems that often negate the definition of non-discrimination which disempower women and promote inequalities. There are also institutional mechanisms for women at both the federal and state levels that are proactive in the quest for women advancement and gender equality.

We wish to state that much progress has been made in the areas of the formulation of national policies and action plans to promote gender equality, reduce violence against women, increased access by women to economic activities and girls to education, with a significant decrease in women and girls illiteracy rate. The same situation can be said of reduction in child mortality, maternal morbidity, HIV/AIDS prevalence, malaria and other diseases.

Mr. Chairman,

There has also been an active and enhanced participation of women's civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of both national and International initiatives in the country including the

formulation and revision of domestic laws and regulations as they affect women. Nigeria's commitment to the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment has been further demonstrated by the adoption of a National Gender Policy with its Strategic Implementation Framework and Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria is also committed to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly with respect to goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 which enhance the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, education and health and has put in place numerous institutional mechanisms to achieve the parity.

The time has come for women to move beyond being on the agenda to setting the agenda themselves. Nigeria is against the horrendous crime of trafficking in women and children, hence the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003 (TIPLEA) as amended was a landmark. The law specifically set up a crime fighting Agency called National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic In Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) to address all issues relating to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) especially women and children from Enforcement, through Prosecution to Rehabilitation and Reintegration of victims.

The law provides punishment for criminal offences relating to sexual exploitation or holding girls and women in sex slavery. It further enjoins the Agency to protect the victims of crime and treat them as such and not as criminals. Since inception, no fewer than 2,285 victims have passed through the agency with about 32 human traffickers prosecuted. Over 1,500 victims have passed through counseling services with 45 fully rehabilitated and reintegrated.

To further address violence against women and the girl child, 'Temporary Shelters' including free medical treatment for female victims of domestic and sexual violence was established nationwide, while stringent measures and penalties ranging from 2 – 14 years imprisonment are being meted to rapists of innocent girls and women. The apparent low level of reporting of sexual crimes and the low prosecution and conviction rates for such offences has however been a source of concern.

Mr. Chairman,

No doubt, over the years the stakes of partisan politics in Nigeria have become higher and the battles tougher for women. Nevertheless there has been a steady increase of 2% in the number of elected women into the legislative arm of government over the past three general elections. These increases no matter how marginal attest to the fact that women are determined to overcome these challenges and register their participation and contributions to Nigeria's democratic governance.

On HIV/AIDS, the Presidential campaign on the prevention and management of this pandemic has led to the reduction of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS from 4.9% in 2006 to 3.7%. The existence of National, State and Local Government Committees as well as NGOs working in partnership in Nigeria has made this feat possible.

Similarly, tremendous in-roads have been made in the area of women education, particularly the girl child education in spite of cultural and ethnic differences. Its policies and programmes on education favour the girl child and have produced tremendous results. Infact, the elementary school system is being re-invigorated to encompass a nine-year Universal Basic Education.

In engendering community participation for improved access to education, four thousand, five hundred and twenty five (**4,525**) educationally disadvantaged communities in ten States of the federation have benefited from massive training programmes held at the community level under the self help component of the World **Bank Assisted Second Primary Education Project (PEP)**. **This is an on-going process in the country.**

In order to improve the status of women in rural areas and achieve integrated rural development and agricultural production, the various tiers of governments have provided subsidies in respect of infrastructure, fertilizer, improved agricultural extension services, harnessing of the country's water resources and development of small-scale rural agro-industries.

Mr. Chairman,

While acknowledging the various gains enumerated above, there are nonetheless a number of challenges to be overcome. These include, amongst others, the limitation of financial and human resources for promoting gender equality; the relatively low level of women's participation in decision-making at all levels; the persistent and unreported violent cases against women.

Maternal deaths, together with child mortality have continued to be one of the most serious development challenges in the country. In its efforts to address the problem, the government has taken the following bold measures amongst others. Firstly, it has increased budgetary allocation to the health sector at all levels of governance to ensure adequate Primary Health Care facilities. Secondly, it has increased health manpower at both rural/urban areas. Thirdly, additional monitoring structures have been put in place at all levels with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and reporting lines.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to renew and reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the full and effective implementation of all international instruments put in place for the empowerment of women. We also, wish to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the importance of the promotion of the application of Gender Responsive Budgeting particularly in the African Region in order to mobilize adequate funding for the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including the outcome of other international sessions and instruments.

I thank you.