



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE

66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRD COMMITTEE

DEBATE ON ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: AGENDA ITEM 28(a-c)

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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to, first of all, express the appreciation of the Nigerian delegation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on the advancement of women. I would also like to thank Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of UN Women, for her report. Permit me to commend the Executive Board of UN Women, under the presidency of Ambassador Joy Ogwu, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, for its efforts in guiding the Entity through its formative first year. I assure UN Women of Nigeria's continued cooperation.

Nigeria aligns herself with the statements made on behalf of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria is committed to the full and effective implementation of the various international instruments on gender equality and women empowerment, particularly the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly, which ushered in new perspectives for the advancement of women. Our National Gender Policy and its Strategic Implementation Framework and Plan draw inspiration and guidance from these documents, focusing on the implementation of the key priority areas of women's reproductive health rights; girl-child

education; situation of rural women; eradication of violence against women; women's economic empowerment and increased women's participation in decision-making. These have been integrated into our Transformation Agenda – the blueprint for transforming Nigeria into one of the world's most economically vibrant, politically stable and socially coherent countries in the near future.

On increasing women's participation in decision-making, I am glad to note that, in accordance with President Jonathan's commitment to true affirmative action on women, 33% of cabinet Ministers are women, as against 11% last year. We believe that women's voices, leadership, participation and representation are important pathways to their equality and empowerment, as well as national development and stability. There is no doubt that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency, sustained economic growth, peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of gender-based violence continues to be of great concern for us. Governments, civil society and other stakeholders are working assiduously toward its elimination. To this end, a number of legislations have been passed; they include: Gender and Equal Opportunities Law, (2007); Child Rights Act 2003; National Child Policy (2007) and its Strategic Plan of Action/Implementation Framework (2007/2008). In addition, draft legislations on Sexual Harassment to prohibit sexual

harassment in schools and in the work place; the Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking (2008); and the Abolition of all forms of Violence Against Persons in Nigeria and Other Related Matters are at various stages of completion. Meanwhile, the domestication of CEDAW remains a national priority.

Mr. Chairman,

A Conditional Grants Scheme and a Conditional Cash Transfer were recently established at all three tiers of government to address the many girl-child issues in the country, including lack of access to schooling, malnutrition, inadequate health services, early marriage, female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women and girls and obstetric fistula. As poverty remains the main social risk factor, Government is hopeful that the schemes, targeting only women and girls with the most need, would facilitate school attendance, access to medical services and reduce street hawking by the girl-child. This will help to address the abuse, discrimination and disempowerment that women and girls are subjected to. Over \$300 million was spent in these schemes in 2008 and 2009, and we have seen a reduction in street hawking and increased school enrolment and retention among girls. In addition, over the past two years, Government has doubled resources for strengthening the Women's Centre, providing credit facilities to boost income generating activities, and promote vocational skills training for women victims of violence and VVF. This has also enabled a great

number of vulnerable groups of women in our society to live independent and meaningful lives.

To enhance Maternal and Child survival and boost the implementation of the Integrated Maternal, New born and Child Health strategy in the country, almost all the States of the Federation now offer free maternal and child care services through the adoption and implementation of “Free Mother and Child Health Care Policy”. The Government has continued to increase its budgetary allocation to the programme on an annual basis to reduce the cost-related barriers preventing women and children from accessing adequate health care services.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude by stating that Nigeria will continue to support UN Women, working with it to promote the advancement and empowerment of women in Nigeria and around the world. We continue to count on the support of the international community in this endeavor.

I thank you.