



N I G E R I A

STATEMENT

BY

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AT

**THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE FOURTH
SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

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Mr. President,
Madam High Commissioner,
Your Excellencies,

Let me begin by joining all those who have spoken before me in congratulating and commending the President of the Council, Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, and all members of the Bureau, for guiding our deliberations and providing quality leadership. Their efforts have no doubt contributed significantly to advancing the work of the Council.

Nigeria therefore hopes that the spirit of goodwill and mutual understanding at this session will characterize the outcome of our collective endeavour directed at improving our common humanity through the instrumentality of human rights.

Mr. President,

Nigeria recognises the efforts of the Council to emplace the structures for its operation, in accordance with Resolution 60/251 of the General Assembly. While we must applaud the progress that has been made, more useful work and challenges remain. I share the expectations of many that progress in the Council's institutional-building efforts will well

position the Council as it prepares to mark its first anniversary in June this year. To this end, the timely completion, by the Council, of the review and rationalization of all mandates of the defunct Commission will foster the fulfilment of the Council's mandate. Nigeria reaffirms her commitment to work with others to advance dialogue and cooperation within the Council for the promotion and protection of all human rights.

Mr. President,

Both human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations around the world depend on this Council for the provision of real and effective remedies to all incidents of systematic violation of their fundamental rights. The international community expects and, indeed, demands concerted action on the part of the Council to defend humanity from human rights violations. We call upon the Council to remain focused, principled, credible, objective, firm and timely in response to human rights violations.

The Council has so far held three regular sessions and four special sessions, three of which were on the situation of human rights in the Middle East and the other on the crisis in Darfur. This is reassuring to all victims of human rights abuses and signifies a commitment to intervene, in a timely fashion, in unfolding human rights situations around the

world. It also suggests a paradigm shift from the selectivity and double standards that hitherto defined the treatment of human rights.

Mr. President,

This first year of the Council had not only been one of transition, but also a moment to build a principled human rights organ that can deliver results. The central challenge is that of developing the mandatory universal periodic review and establishing tradition of sound judgement in choosing the best means of addressing different human rights situations globally.

Nigeria reiterates the relevance of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the promotion, protection and observance of fundamental human rights. This form of periodic review is a process that Africa had already adopted and put to practice through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM allows not only for transparency, but especially self-assessment by States and should, therefore, be a model worthy of emulation by the Council as it strives to develop its Universal Periodic Review.

The UPR should evolve in a way that serves the purpose for which it was intended, that is universality of application and pragmatic criticism or censure of violators of Human

Rights. The process should involve mutual cooperation among States, and must avoid any attempt at the imposition of certain alien practices and values by some States on others.

Mr. President,

The most acute human rights problems in the world today are poverty, discrimination, conflicts and diseases. Preventable diseases and malnutrition kill children in their millions despite the abundance of resources. Conflicts that could be prevented, if statesmanship and sober judgements had been deployed to situations, are allowed to kindle and rage unabated. Nigeria is concerned that Africa is at the receiving end of this preventable suffering and the massive and systematic denial of human rights. While these problems have been attributed to underdevelopment, an umbilical connection between security and development has given these problems a concrete human rights dimension.

Now that the world faces the great challenges of promoting and protecting human rights, especially in the social and economic fields, it is imperative that an agreeable balance between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other should be found and given adequate attention. Otherwise, the discussion of human rights, especially in their civil and political contents alone, would be meaningless to the vast

majority of people around the world. In this context, let us be reminded that political instability and conflicts, particularly in Africa, are intrinsically linked to economic development.

Nigeria calls on countries in a position to do so to increase the net transfers of developmental and financial assistance to developing countries, particularly in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This could be achieved through a renewed commitment by all to deploy 0.7% of Gross Domestic Products for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). This is critical to the achievement of the MDGs.

Creating the right environment for the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms require the establishment of durable democracy and effective operation of the rule of law. To this end, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is implementing a broad and participatory initiative, encompassing political and economic reforms, to consolidate democracy and to improve the living conditions of all Nigerians. In the area of labour laws, Nigeria has signed over 35 Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and is presently harmonizing its labour legislations to conform to international standards.

Nigeria is also charting a new development agenda that seeks not only to empower and give voice to its citizens, but to

make them vital owners of the change process. The largely successful fight against corruption now going in Nigeria is an important component of the economic and political reform agenda.

Mr. President,

The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has also amply demonstrated its commitment to gender equality in all endeavours of life, including the empowerment of women. In this regard, Nigeria is a State Party to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol. Nigeria has also ratified the protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which is an adjunct to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. And to further enhance women's participation in Nigeria's political life, women empowerment offices are being established in the country's six geo-political zones.

Nigeria has equally demonstrated commitment to the respect, promotion and protection of human rights by inviting four mandate holders to Nigeria. The recent visit last week by Mr. Manfred Nowak, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture illustrates our continuing willingness to cooperate with all UN processes and procedures in the area of human rights.

Mr. President,

What our relationship with mandate holders suggests is that where there is the will and the commitment, significant steps that would improve the human rights environment in our country can be taken and implemented fully. This is the example and the message which I would like to leave with you. Let us all resolve to open our minds to the dynamics of international processes and best practices. Let us be determined to deliver the full enjoyment of human rights to all our peoples irrespective of gender, social circumstances or station in life.

I thank you all.