



N I G E R I A

STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, CHIEF OJO MADUEKWE, CFR
Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria

AT

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

GENEVA, 4TH MARCH 2008

Please, Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

High Commissioner,

Your Excellencies,

Permit me first of all, to convey to you the warm and sincere greetings of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. I also wish to commend you and the Bureau for your good work in ensuring the successful establishment of the Human Rights Council. I should like to assure you of my delegation's full support as you lead the session in addressing the challenges and tasks before this Council.

Mr. President,

Much work has already gone into the building of the new Council, reflecting the commitment, dedication and support of Member States. This is, as it should be. Nigeria, strongly believes that the Human Rights Council deserves our fullest support and indeed, a prime of place in our global exertions. That is why we must make haste, albeit in solidarity and collaboration, to conclude the unfinished aspects of the work of the Council, including the ongoing review, rationalization and improvement of all mandates of the defunct Commission.

Similarly, we need to expedite action on such key issues as the elaboration of the relevant Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which are inextricably linked to civil and political rights. In our view, this is critical to giving desired prominence to the right to development, which, in itself,

is fundamental and key to addressing the acute human rights issues associated with extreme poverty, conflicts and diseases that afflict many of our nations.

Mr. President,

It is now over seven years since the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was held in Durban, South Africa. At the end of that historic conference, difficult though the proceedings were, we unanimously adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action to give effect to our collective resolve to tackle the problems of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Regrettably, till date, not only has there been a seeming reluctance to implement the Durban commitments, but indeed there has also been a perceived design to scuttle and reverse the gains of Durban. This must not be. Nigeria is strongly of the opinion that the forthcoming Durban Review Conference presents both the opportunity and the moment for the redress of the pains and hurt of past and present forms of discrimination in all its varied and vicious forms.

Concerning other aspects of the work of the Council, Nigeria would warmly welcome the initiation of serious and comprehensive discussions on the relationship between climate change and human rights, the establishment of new norms for the attainment of the UN Millennium Developments Goals, so vital for the countries of Africa. Equally importantly, our work will also benefit from the recognition of the nexus between human rights and human security.

On climate change, we welcome the recent statement made by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighting that climate change now constitutes a direct and potent threat to the enjoyment of human rights by millions of our people. We urge that no time be lost in addressing this issue of global concern, particularly in supporting the ongoing process in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reach a comprehensive global agreement on the post 2010 Kyoto commitments.

On human rights and human security, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a challenge which we cannot and should not ignore. So too is the threat posed by millions of unexploded anti-personnel landmines that dot the landscape of many African countries. The Council should address these issues.

Mr. President,

Consistent with our policy, I am pleased to assure that Nigeria stands ready, at all times, to work with you in continuing to espouse, uphold and defend the tenets, principles and objectives of the Council, notably the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, including their mainstreaming into the fabric of governance worldwide.

Already, in our country, we have commenced preparations for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) exercise scheduled for the first quarter of 2009. We welcome the opportunity of this upcoming review, which would, in fact, be complementing the review processes already undertaken under the African Union Peer Review Mechanism.

To ensure maximum success for the UPR exercise, we will soon be establishing national coordinating and inter-ministerial committees to assist with the UPR process. The National Commission on Human Rights, Civil Society Organizations, women and youth associations and several other grass-root organizations will also be fully mobilized and sensitized. The Federal Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women Affairs and my ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been identified as line ministries to coordinate government efforts in this regard.

Mr. President,

In his inaugural speech in May last year, His Excellency, President Yar'Adua articulated the respect for human rights, the deepening of democracy and the promotion of good governance as core principles of his administration,. At the epicenter of these core values are the promotion, protection and defence of the rule of law and zero tolerance for corruption and corrupt practices in all their facets.

I am happy to state that several months after the enunciation of these core principles, the administration has amply demonstrated unprecedented dedication and commitment to actualizing them. Its resolve has been manifested in concrete policies and actions taken to expand good governance and deepen the promotion and protection of human rights across the nation. Free reign has been given to high profile prosecutions of suspects of corruption and corrupt practices by whomsoever committed. In order to consolidate the gains of democracy in the country, far reaching electoral reforms are being undertaken, coupled with a review of the conduct of past elections, to sanitize electoral processes once and for all.

Overall, Nigeria is charting a new development agenda that seeks not only to empower and give voice to its citizens, but also to enable them enjoy the dividends of democracy as owners, managers and drivers of the ongoing processes of development and change.

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies,

This seventh session of the Council takes place as we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). We congratulate the Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for launching a campaign that will run through the last the whole year to celebrate the anniversary. That landmark declaration established the basis for national self-determination and created the conditions for decolonization and independence. It gave vent to the yearnings of peoples for racial equality, dignity and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. It also established the premise for religious freedom, economic, social and cultural rights, gender equality and other civil and political liberties.

The continued and unmitigated observance of the tenets of the UDHR should be the watchword of all members of the United Nations. Sixty years after its coming into effect, it still retains its freshness and relevance to the yearnings of most people in their quest in their quest for freedom, respect and dignity.

This Council, the new Human Rights Council, exists to ensure this and Nigeria renews its commitment to continue to cooperate with it fully to achieving this end.

I thank you.