



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UN
GENEVA**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 59TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 13 OCTOBER 2004

Mr. Chairman,

The Nigerian delegation offers warm congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee for the 59th Session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will provide the requisite leadership to steer our work to a successful conclusion. Let me also, through you, congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you and the Bureau of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I also wish to thank the Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, for his introductory statement which is very useful for our work.

Mr. Chairman,

This meeting is holding at a time when the international community is faced with increasing divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. The need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The last decade had witnessed the indefinite extension of the NPT, the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines. These achievements flowed from shared international concerns about the danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons posed to mankind.

By contrast, the international community has recorded a string of failures on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade. The CTBT has not yet entered into force due to lack of ratification by some States whose ratification is mandatory for it to enter into force. The negotiations to conclude a compliance protocol on biological weapons remain inconclusive just as no progress has been made in negotiating an instrument to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. The perennial paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) appears to have assumed a permanent character. Of no less significance is the failure of other disarmament machineries, in particular, the Disarmament Commission to agree on an agenda for its work. Similarly, efforts to convene SSOD-IV over the past several years remain as illusive as ever.

With regard to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, Nigeria fully supports the A5 proposal as a mechanism for breaking the existing impasse in reaching a work programme for the CD. Nigeria also believes that the FMCT is due for negotiation but for the outcome to be meaningful, it should contain a reliable verification mechanism that should not exclude existing stockpile.

In the face of the general stalemate in the field of arms control and disarmament, we are convinced that time has come for demonstration of the necessary political will on the part all States in order to make progress in this area especially in confronting the common challenge of proliferation of arms across the globe.

One of these major challenges is the threat posed by the existence, and the consequent proliferation, of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. As a result, these weapons continue to be an issue of grave concern to the international community. Member States owe a moral obligation to humankind for their total elimination and to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control. This is the most effective way to guarantee that the weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors or terrorists.

This brings me to the problem of lack of compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation regime by States Parties to NPT. As we all know, this treaty remains one of the most vital instruments in the maintenance of international peace and security. The impression, often created, that the obligation to comply with the Treaty lies only with non-nuclear-weapon States Parties, could be detrimental to the aims and objectives of the Treaty; and ultimately to the enhancement of international peace and security. All States Parties, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, have an obligation for non-proliferation in all its aspects. In a similar manner, every State Party is under obligation to fulfill its commitment to the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, in keeping with Article VI of the treaty.

There is need to reaffirm this commitment at the 7th Review Conference of the Treaty next year. It is regrettable, however, that the Third Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference failed in May this year to agree on an agenda or recommendations for that Conference, thus raising doubts about the fate of the Review Conference and NPT itself.

On regional disarmament, the Nigerian delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. In this regard, we call for the ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba, by the required number of States so that it can enter into force without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the full implementation of Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions as recently demonstrated by the establishment by her of a national Council for the full

implementation of the two conventions. The Federal Government has also submitted a national report to OPCW in compliance with Article III of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, Nigeria has completed a national register on chemical materials imported, produced or consumed in the country and is vigorously pursuing the establishment of a chemical reference laboratory where chemical samples will be tested. Two separate draft national legislations on the chemical and biological weapons are currently under active consideration by the appropriate organ of the State. The Federal Government is also seeking the cooperation of OPCW in the review of some of the existing laws of the Federation that will impact on the national implementation legislations of the two conventions.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria remains unequivocal in its support for the total elimination of all nuclear testing. As a result, she has always stressed the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), including by all nuclear weapon States, which, among others, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we call for the ratification of the Treaty by all States, in particular the remaining 11 of the 44 States whose ratification is mandatory for its entry into force. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, it is important that the moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device, be maintained.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the obligations undertaken in the Programme of Action of the 2001 UN Conference on small arms. We welcome the commencement of negotiations for an international instrument to enable States identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. The magnitude of the problem posed by the proliferation of small arms demands that the instrument envisaged should be legally binding for effective implementation. It is our belief that the success of the Working Group on Tracing will have positive impact on the forthcoming Second Biennial Meeting of States on small arms in 2005 and the Review Conference in 2006 that will assess the progress so far made in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In the West African sub-region to which we belong, consideration is currently being given to achieving the ultimate objective of transforming the ECOWAS Moratorium on import/export of small arms from its current status of a political instrument to that of a legally binding Convention. The cooperation of the international community would be absolutely essential in realizing this important objective.

Nigeria's unrelenting fight against illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was further advanced with the destruction on 2nd September 2004 of 1139 illicit firearms and 1474 ammunitions in commemoration of the United Nations Small Arms Day. Earlier this year, a three-day ECOWAS Conference on Combating Illicit Small Arms Brokering and Trafficking was held in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, from 22 to 24 March, under the sponsorship of the governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The Conference was successful in sensitizing ECOWAS member states on the problem of illicit brokering and helped in developing common understanding on ways to address the problem, including sub-regional coordination mechanisms.

My delegation welcomes the forthcoming First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention on landmines, known as the Nairobi Summit for a Mine Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December this year as an excellent opportunity not only to evaluate the progress that has been made in the last five years in its implementation but also to chart the course for complete eradication of the weapon by the second Review Conference in 2009. We call upon all States Parties to attend the Conference at the highest possible level.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation will again this year sponsor, as it has done in the past, a draft resolution entitled, 'United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services'. The programme, which Nigeria initiated in 1978, has trained 645 fellows from 152 States. We appreciate the support of Member States that have continued to provide resources and facilities for participants in the programme. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which the United Nations Secretariat has implemented the programme over the years. We call on Member States to support the draft resolution on the programme when presented as they had always done in the past.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.