



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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S T A T E M E N T

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

**FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 6 OCTOBER, 2006

Madam Chairperson,

The Nigerian delegation offers you its warm congratulations on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee of the 61st 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, convey similar sentiments to other members of the Bureau and assure you of our cooperation throughout the Session.

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

Madam Chairperson,

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 not made any appreciable progress on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade, the most notable failures, being lack of an outcome to the 2005 NPT Review Conference as well as the failure by Member States to agree on the Cluster on Disarmament and Non-proliferation in the World Summit Outcome Document. These failures are additional to the perennial impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the lingering ambivalence towards the negotiation of an FMCT. While Nigeria shares the view of the majority of delegations that the FMCT should contain a reliable verification mechanism that should not exclude existing stockpiles, the debate over this issue should not be used as an excuse for inaction or delay on the commencement of substantive negotiations on this important subject.

The risk to international peace and security that the prevailing stalemate in multilateral disarmament negotiations constitutes is glaring. It is common knowledge that threats emanating from excessive accumulation of weapons of mass destruction could be a stimulating factor for others to do the same. The report of WMD Commission amply described the danger inherent in weapons accumulation when it stated that States would aspire to acquire nuclear weapons as long as any State has them, and the risk exists that such weapons will one day be used either by design or by accident as long as they remain.

This is why the problem of lack of compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation regime under the NPT is worrisome. There is no gainsaying the fact that this treaty remains one of the most vital instruments for maintaining global peace and security. The mistaken

impression, created that the obligation to comply with the Treaty lies only with non-nuclear-weapon States Parties, should it persist, could only be detrimental to the aims and objectives of the Treaty. Nigeria reaffirms that all States Parties, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, have an obligation for non-proliferation in all its aspects.

States that possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction can longer continue to pretend that their weapons pose no threat to the global community. The call for non-proliferation must be complimented by concrete action in the area of nuclear disarmament. This is the most effective way that the weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors. Indeed, States that feel threatened by the possession of these weapons need to be assured through confidence-building measures as well as security guarantees anchored on legally binding instruments that their decisions to forgo the acquisition of nuclear weapons were not misplaced.

I wish to assure you, Madam Chairperson, that Nigeria will continue to abide by its commitment under various disarmament and arms control agreements to which she is a party as well as work with other nations in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. Such cooperation should lead to the achievement of the overall objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Madam Chairperson,

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the opening the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature, yet the Treaty has not entered into force despite its signature by 176 States and ratification by 135. While reiterating our support for the total elimination of nuclear testing, we wish to stress the importance of achieving the entry into force of CTBT, in particular through adherence by the remaining 'Annex II' States whose ratification is mandatory for the Treaty to enter into force. Nigeria welcomes the ratification of the Treaty by Vietnam in March this year and endorses the Joint Ministerial Declaration on CTBT adopted in New York on 20 September 2006. Pending its entry into force, the Treaty should continue to enjoy the support of Member States. We call on Member States to continue to maintain the existing moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device.

Nigeria reiterates 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. As a demonstration of our commitment to the de-nuclearization of Africa, Nigeria initiated a proposal in January this year at the 8th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union in Khartoum, which the Council adopted in a decision calling on States that have not signed or ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba on African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone or its Protocols that concern them, to do so to enable the Treaty enter into force without further delay. We urge the affected States to implement, or comply as applicable, with the decision of the Council as early as possible. We also welcome the signing of the Treaty on nuclear-weapon-free zone by five Central Asian States on 8 September 2006.

The Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention which will hold in November this year, offers us an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the international regime in confronting and removing the threat of biological weapons and their use. An effective verification mechanism will strengthen the Convention in this regard. We trust that States Parties will give a serious consideration to this matter during the Review Conference.

Madam Chairperson,

In the West African sub-region, the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons has fuelled conflicts and compromised our well-thought out efforts to create a basis for peace, security and stability in a number of our countries. Member States of ECOWAS which initiated and faithfully maintained a Moratorium on the importation and exportation of these arms, have now transformed that Moratorium into a landmark Convention. Adopted in June this year, the Convention, inter alia, places a ban on arms transfers and their manufacturing materials into, from or through West Africa. Of particular significance for our region, is the ban on the transfer of these small arms and light weapons to non-State actors who have been implicated in the re-curent conflicts in the sub-region and the attendant political instability and destruction of infrastructure. A Member State of ECOWAS shall be granted exemption for such transfers solely for purposes of legitimate national defence and security needs or participation in peacekeeping efforts, but these will have to receive the certification and approval of other Member States.

Our determination to eradicate this scourge from our sub-region is, therefore, not in doubt. We, therefore, call on the international community, manufacturers of SALWs and brokering firms to respect the Convention. Nigeria invites other members of the United Nations to follow the example of ECOWAS in confronting the menace of illicit small arms trafficking in their respective regions.

The Nigerian delegation wishes to express its disappointment over the failure of the first Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons to agree on a final document. We believe that this failure must not detract from the continuing relevance of the Programme of Action as a valid platform for national, regional and global action. The review process should be kept alive and the follow-up arrangements adhered to in order to ensure the realization of our shared goals and objectives. As a demonstration of Nigeria's strong commitment to the fight against illicit SALW, the Federal Government in March this year acceded to the UN Firearms Protocol which entered into force in July 2005.

I wish to recall that in his address to the General Assembly on 25 September 2006, President Olusegun Obasanjo had said inter alia, " We also call for a comprehensive and legally binding global Arms Trade Treaty". We believe that such a Treaty should establish a common standard on arms transfers, regulate international arms trade and ensure their non-diversion to unauthorized end-users. We shall work with delegations for the success of this goal.

Madam Chairperson,

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 704 fellows from 155 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. It is our hope that co-sponsors will give support to the draft resolution at this Session and that many more States will do likewise to give it universality.

I thank you.