



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## STATEMENT

BY

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OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE  
63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 7<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2008

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to congratulate you and members of the Bureau on your election. I assure you of our support and cooperation. We are convinced that under your able leadership our deliberations will be guided to a successful conclusion. I also thank the High Representative, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his introductory statement. Nigeria associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement and the African group.

Mr. Chairman,

The end of the Cold War was expected to usher in a new era of global peace and security. Unfortunately, the hope generated by that important development has apparently turned out to be an illusion. This session of the First Committee is thus being held at a time when the international community faces increasing divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. Also, the need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures has become a major challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is common knowledge that the last decade witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (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. Those achievements flowed from shared international concerns about the danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose to mankind.

By contrast, the international community has made no appreciable progress on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade, the most notable failures being the lack of any meaningful outcome document to the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the first review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on SALW, and the failure by Member States to agree on a thematic cluster on disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. This decade has also witnessed the perennial impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, the lingering ambivalence about the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the continuing failure to ratify the CTBT, and the inability of the Disarmament Commission to agree on guidelines for pursuit of disarmament objectives.

The risk to international peace and security posed by the prevailing stalemate in multilateral disarmament negotiations is glaring. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that world military expenditures which stood at \$780 billion at the beginning of this decade has now risen to \$1.34 trillion. This, in essence, translates into \$202 for each person on earth in a world where some people live on less than one dollar per day. The need to reverse this negative trend should be seen as one of the greatest challenges of the international community today. Threats emanating from the excessive accumulation of weapons, either conventional or those of mass destruction, are known to be among the factors that stimulate others to acquire those weapons. I will, therefore, not fail to underscore the importance of confidence-building measures in alleviating the fears of States that may feel threatened by the possession of mass destructive weapons by others. Security guarantees cast firmly in legally binding documents, remain, in our view, the best assurance that such States will not similarly acquire nuclear arms in presumption of self-defence. Such guarantees have a secondary utility in assuring non-nuclear weapon States that their decisions to forgo the acquisition of the nuclear weapons under NPT were not misplaced.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to reaffirm Nigeria's belief in multilateralism as the core principle for addressing issues of disarmament and international security. We will continue to abide by our commitments under the various disarmament and arms control agreements to which we are

party, as well as work with other nations in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. It is our hope that such cooperation will lead to the achievement of the overall objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Nigeria also reaffirms that all States parties, nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon alike, share a common obligation to ensure non-proliferation in all its aspects. We maintain that the call for non-proliferation must be complemented by concrete action in the area of nuclear disarmament as the most effective way of ensuring that such weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors. As a first step, efforts should be made towards the ratification of CTBT, in particular through adherence by the remaining Annex II States, whose ratification is mandatory for the Treaty to enter into force. Pending its entry into force, nuclear weapon States should continue to maintain the existing moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device. The Nigerian delegation will continue to maintain its position on the need to guarantee the inalienable rights of all States to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Nigeria also 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. As a demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the denuclearization of Africa, she initiated a proposal at the 8<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union, held in Khartoum, Sudan, in 2006 which the Council adopted calling on States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba or its relevant protocols, to do so, in order to enable the Treaty to enter into force without further delay. We urge the States concerned to implement or comply with the decision of the Council, as applicable to them.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the UN Programme of Action on SALW. We note with regret, however, that in spite of efforts at various levels, illicit circulation of small arms has continued and their devastating effects on African States in particular, seem to mock the political will which we all exhibited at the time of adoption of the Programme of Action in 2001. This is evident in the increased number and prolonged nature of armed conflicts, in the increasing number of victims, in ruined economies, and large-scale humanitarian crisis. In this regard, one of the greatest challenges which we all face is how to accord priority to the issue of preventing easy accessibility of these weapons to non-State actors. The need can, therefore, not be over-emphasised for the elaboration of a legally binding international instrument that will not only establish common international standards for global arms trade but also control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors. This is the role that my delegation envisages for the International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In concluding such instrument, the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons signed in Abuja, Nigeria, in June 2006, could serve as a useful guide.

As a further demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons, the Nigerian Government has acceded to the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which entered into force in July 2005. We urge Member States to follow-up on the framework of the recently concluded 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of UN Programme of Action on SALW.

Mr. Chairman,

We remain convinced that the best and most effective strategy for achieving the goal of preventing, combating and eradicating this illicit and deadly trade is through the elaboration of a legally-binding global instrument, as well as the political will on the part of all, to stem the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms. There is need, therefore, for urgent action to

criminalize oil bunkering, the sale of oil so acquired and the use of its proceeds to fuel new crisis situations in Africa, through the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. The same creativity and political will that was demonstrated in confronting “blood diamonds” as a source of regional instability must be available this time in dealing with “blood oil” that now threatens the Gulf.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Nigerian delegation will again this year sponsor, as it had done before, a draft resolution entitled “United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme”. The programme, which was initiated by Nigeria in 1978, has trained over 700 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 he 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.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.