

**STATEMENT OF NIGERIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
ADOPTION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UNIVERSAL
PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF NIGERIA**

11th June 2009

Mr. President,

I am delighted to address the Human Rights Council at its 11th Session. We are particularly delighted to do so on this important occasion of the consideration and adoption of the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Nigeria.

2. It was exactly four months ago that, Nigeria's human rights practices and environment were reviewed by the UPR Working Group. Nigeria engaged in the review process with utmost openness and transparency. It was a stimulating and enriching experience.

3. Nigeria benefited immensely from all views expressed by all participants during the process of the review. In all, 32 clusters of recommendations were made by the Working Group in its Report. In the intervening period, we have reflected on and carefully considered these recommendations and comments. This has been done with the active collaboration of all relevant stakeholders, taking into account our existing domestic constitutional provisions.

Mr. President,

4. Today, the Nigerian delegation is before the Council not only to give Nigeria's response to these recommendations, but also to reaffirm her commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all Nigerians, as well as to cooperate with the Council in the execution of its mandate. I wish to state, at the outset, that Nigeria has accepted 30 out of the 32 cluster of recommendations made while taking note of recommendations 12 and 13.

5. As we said during the adoption of the report by the Working Group, we have, on our own, already commenced the implementation of some of the recommendations even before they were made. Appropriate legislation to give the necessary legal backing

for their implementation is ongoing. Some of them include, the Freedom of Information Bill, the Bill in respect of granting autonomy to the National Human Rights Commission, Prison Reforms Bill, the Police Act, the Electoral Reforms Bills and the Review of the Constitution of the Federal Republic, etc.

6. While appreciating the importance of all the recommendations contained in the Report, it should be noted that because of constitutional and legal implications, Nigeria cannot effect some of them immediately. However, Nigeria is determined to work assiduously towards their implementation after effecting necessary legislative changes.

Mr. President,

7. At this stage, however, I wish to affirm that a substantial number of the recommendations are already being implemented by the Government. For instance, on the recommendation on accession to human rights instruments, President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua signed, in January 2009, instruments of accession to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. In addition, Nigeria has now ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Indeed a Bill on this matter has already been passed by the National Assembly.

8. On the issue of the protection of minority rights, it is important to state here that apart from the constitutional safeguards for the protection of their rights there is in existence the comprehensive application of the constitutional Federal Character Principle following the establishment of the Federal Character Commission which ensures that the distribution of national resources and political appointments, on the basis of the country's six geo-political zones, is followed to the letter. This has gone a long way in meeting the concerns of minority groups in the country.

Mr. President,

9. Nigeria is proud of its great ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. That is why today, for instance, there is no Nigerian language which does not enjoy air time in government owned broadcast stations in the states in which such language is spoken. The liberal nature of Nigeria provides the fertile ground for both public and private sector initiatives to promote cultural and linguistic rights without any constraints whatsoever.

10. The Government has also addressed and continues to address the specific challenges of certain areas of the country with greater determination. For instance, it created the Ministry for Niger-Delta in 2009. This is in addition to earlier action, such as the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), the Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) in 2000, etc to accelerate the pace of development in the region. The Crude Oil Derivation Fund to the nine states in the Niger Delta is 13 per cent, beyond the allocation to other states of the country from the Federation Account. Also, recently, in the pursuit of the logic of peace and in furtherance of dialogue, Government has offered amnesty to all involved in agitational activities in the Niger-Delta.

Mr. President,

11. Regarding economic, social and cultural rights, I wish to indicate that successive Nigerian Governments have taken initiatives aimed at the realization of these rights, which are recognized in our Constitution as fundamental human rights. In this regard, Nigeria established and strengthened pro-poor initiatives, such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) at the national level and State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) in the states, the Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), etc to ensure that all employable people are gainfully engaged. The Administration has gone a step further to strengthen the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) whose major objective is the creation of jobs for people in order

to eradicate poverty, with a particular focus on the rural areas.

Mr. President,

12. On the recommendation for the establishment of a moratorium on executions with a view to abolish the death penalty, Nigeria already has in existence a self imposed moratorium. Nevertheless, our Government has set up a National Committee on the Review of the Death Penalty, the outcome of which will determine Government's decision on this matter, subject to due process of the amendment of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

13. We are firmly of the view that the UPR, which is considered the crown jewel of the Human Rights Council, has the potential, in the years to come, to be a very effective mechanism for the enhancement of all human rights, both nationally and globally.

Mr. President,

14. Nigeria has just been re-elected into the Council. This, to us, is an indication of the premium the international community has placed on Nigeria's commitment, not only to improve the human rights of her citizens, but also to ensure and facilitate peace and stability globally and particularly in our sub-region. We are determined to honour all the commitments we have made in the UPR process, and in this regard, we also ask for the support and encouragement of both the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15. Let me conclude, by paying great tribute to the Human Rights Council, for not only electing one of our own as the President of the Council, but in also supporting him overwhelmingly to achieve great successes during his tenure. Nigeria will firmly continue to cooperate and support the Council in the onerous task of promoting and protecting all human rights for all humanity.

I thank you.