



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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**HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE

**55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN (CSW)**

FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Mr Chairman,

The Nigerian delegation would like to congratulate my dear members of the Bureau on the brilliant organisation and handling of the affairs of this 55th Session of the CSW. I assure you of Nigeria's support throughout the session.

Nigeria aligns herself with the statements that distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation also wishes to join other countries in expressing condolences to the government and people of New Zealand on the recent earthquake in that country. Our hearts are with the victims at this time, especially with the women and children who are usually the worst affected victims in such tragedies.

Mr Chairman,

Nigeria welcomes this year's priority theme of "Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work" for many reasons, but principally because it accords with our own efforts at the national level. We recognise that the education and training of women and girls is a fundamental right and an essential tool for achieving not just the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment, but also for national development. We are happy to note that we are gradually succeeding in bridging the gender gap especially in the area of primary school enrolment and completion. From 43.96% in 1997, the figure rose to 47.98% in 2007, showing a steady increase in arithmetic enrolment of girls in primary schools.

Governments at every level of the federal system are mindful of the need to address issues relating to negative gender stereotypes attached to science education as being a domain for male students. The reviewed National Policy on Education of 2004 encourages the study of sciences by providing incentives to students who study science subjects, with an additional Federal Government scholarship specifically for female university students studying science subjects. Such incentives include conditional cash grants, school feeding, books, uniforms, etc.

As part of the overall strategy to encourage girls to study science-related courses, all-female science secondary schools have been established in some States in the Federation. In addition, science labs known as Science, Technology and Mathematics Unit (STMU) have also been established in all federal primary and secondary schools (known as Unity Schools) across the country to bridge the gap between the number of boys and girls who study science related subjects.

Mr Chairman,

On decent work, although the Nigerian Constitution provides that there be no discrimination on the basis of sex or employment, difficulties persist for women in this area. In spite of women constituting about half of the population of the country, they represent corresponding proportion in the labour market. To address this, there are various programmes at Local, State and Federal level designed to develop the playing field. Along with dedicated employment and wealth creation programmes for women there are also strategies to improve the participation of women in politics and to achieve the 35% female representation across all spheres and sectors.

... Pursuant to this objective of increasing women's participation in politics, we have in the last one year stepped up the momentum for achieving the 35% Affirmative Action, through the organisation of a National Women Political Rally, and the launching of a National Women's Movement called "Women for Change Initiative" championed by Her Excellency, the First Lady of Nigeria, Mrs Patience Jonathan. We have also established a Database for Women Aspirants; a Women's Political Trust Fund (to support female candidates across parties), Capacity Building programmes for Female Aspirants and the inauguration of the "100 Women Group" (to assist women in the forthcoming general elections. It is our belief that the outcome of the 2011 general elections will be very favourable to women...

Mr Chairman,

Reducing Child and Maternal Mortality remains key targets for Nigeria. As the world moves towards the deadline for the attainment of the MDGs, the need to strengthen health care delivery systems and provide accessible and affordable health care is high on the country's development agenda. A number of strategies have been put in place including: an Emergency Assisted Intervention Scheme to ease transportation problems in the rural areas for pregnant women; a Midwives Service Scheme to ensure the availability of skilled birth attendants in hospitals. It is envisaged that the combination of the two schemes would save the lives of 36,000 mothers and 157,000 babies annually.

Mr Chairman,

Nigeria is proud of its modest achievement in gender mainstreaming, gender equality and women's empowerment. The development and fruitful implementation of a coherent gender strategy in the form of the National Gender Policy has been instrumental to this success. Our gender policy focuses on the 6 priority areas of: women's increased participation in decision-making; women's reproductive health rights; girl-child education; situation of rural women; elimination of violence against women; and poverty eradication. Funds for empowerment of women. To facilitate the implementation of the policy, all levels of government have established institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, including Gender Units in all federal ministries, departments and agencies.

Mr Chairman,

I cannot conclude my remarks without congratulating you for the joyful and happy we are at the successful creation and take-off of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The creation of UN Women is a demonstration of the determination of member states to give practical effect to the advancement and protection of the rights and interest of women at the national and international levels. Nigeria is proud to be the first president of the Executive Board of UN Women, and pledges to do its utmost in the bid to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. We also look forward to collaboration and synergy with UN Women at the national level for the achievement of our own national goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I thank you.