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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER COUNSELLOR

AT THE

ANNUAL SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME REPORT ON NIGERIA

NEW YORK, 19TH JUNE, 2013
Mr. President,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address the 2013 session of the Executive Board of UNICEF.

2. On behalf of my government, I would like to express profound gratitude to the Executive Board for the draft country programme document for Nigeria which is under consideration today. UNICEF remains an important partner in my country’s quest for people-centred development. We are therefore pleased with the fact that Nigeria is being considered for funding in excess of $500 million for the period 2014 – 2017.

3. These funds would no doubt go a long way in assisting my government in programme financing that impacts on the lives of Nigerians, especially women and children. It is our hope that pursuant to deliberations at this annual session on the Nigerian draft country programme, the Board would approve a revised version at its 2013 Regular Session.

4. The document before us today indicates that while it is true that considerable progress has been made in certain aspects of human development in Nigeria, a number of challenges still remain. It is, however, gratifying to note UNICEF’s observation regarding the improvements made in the well-being of children towards the attainment of the MDG 6.

5. In a similar context, we have seen a remarkable reduction of under-5 mortality by about 38% from 201 deaths per 1000 live births in 2003 to 124 deaths per 1000 live births in 2011. Infant mortality rates also dropped over the same period from 100 to 78 per 1000. Similar progress has equally been made with regard to maternal mortality ratio which has progressively declined since 2000.
6. Despite the many positive achievements highlighted in the report, there remains a number of concerns in the area of infant and child mortality. We remain deeply concerned about the causes of infant and child mortality identified in the Report; namely, pneumonia, diarrhea among others. While we believe these are preventable, it gives us the hope that with determined action in the area of prevention, we could do much better than we currently are doing.

7. To achieve this, we would be counting on the support of our development partners, especially UNICEF. In view of the remaining challenges, we wish to assure of our unwavering commitment to work assiduously and collaborate with valued partners to further lower infant and child mortality.

8. We are equally pleased with the progress made in other areas such as primary school enrolment, increase in proportion of population with access to safe drinking water and improved child nutrition. Notwithstanding these positive developments, we acknowledge the challenges still faced by our people in the areas of wild polio virus transmission and the considerable burden of HIV-infection. Let me assure the Board that the Government of Nigeria, and indeed the State and Local Government institutions are making efforts to address these remaining challenges.

Mr. President,

9. I should stress that UNICEF’s 2009 – 2013 country programme aligns with our national development initiatives, including the Transformational Agenda of the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and Vision 20:2020. This is indicative that UNICEF is, indeed, a true partner in progress for Nigeria's development. We appreciate this collaborative efforts, including, UNICEF’s sensitivity to our home-grown strategies and development priorities.
10. We are highly delighted by the key results achieved by the UNICEF’s 2009 – 2013 country programme. We remain hopeful that the 2014 – 2017 would be used to consolidate these positive results. We welcome the premium which the 2014 – 2017 draft country programme places on child survival, a figure that represents more than 50% of the entire budget. This is no doubt the first line of action in improving child welfare in Nigeria.

11. Let me reiterate our appreciation for your continued support over the years and to express our wish for better collaboration in the future, for the benefit of the Nigerian child.

12. I thank you.