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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON AGENDA ITEM 64: REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

NEW YORK, 13TH NOVEMBER, 2013
Mr. President,

Nigeria joins other delegations in welcoming Ambassador Henczel to New York and thank him for the presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council. We also commend and thank him for his astute leadership of the Council. My delegation aligns with the statement made by Gabon on behalf of the African Group.

2. The former UNSG Kofi Annan said and I quote: We will not enjoy security without development, we will not enjoy development without security, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. This statement justifies the position of human rights as the third pillar of the United Nations.

3. Nigeria as a democratic country attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights, not just within but transcending our borders. We have been actively engaged with the Human Rights Council since its inception in 2006 having served in the capacity of President in 2008. We are pleased with the progress made by the Council in carrying out the mandate of the General Assembly.

4. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) represents one of the great successes of the Human Rights Council. We had 100 per cent participation in the first cycle of the review and the second cycle, which began in May 2012, has so far seen 70 countries reviewed, including Nigeria.

5. We are particularly pleased with the broad consultations that States under review carry out with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, while preparing their UPR national reports. This inclusiveness is indeed beneficial for the promotion and protection of human rights.

6. The equal allocation of speaking time to all delegations participating in the reviews, as guaranteed by the Council, is a positive development that enhances the relevance of the UPR. Nigeria reaffirms its confidence in the UPR and it is our hope to see 100 per cent participation in the on-going second cycle.

7. We also note with appreciation the admirable work carried out by the Council’s Task Force on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities to improve accessibility at the Human Rights Council. In this regard, we welcome the cooperation the Council is receiving from UN Office in Geneva (UNOG) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Nigeria would
like to see greater facilitation for persons with disabilities in order to widen the scope for their participation in the activities of the Council.

8. The consistent efforts of the Council to webcast proceedings during its regular and special sessions as well as the sessions of the UPR Working Group is indeed commendable. This has allowed for greater transparency in the activities of the Council.

9. Special Procedures mandate holders appointed by the Council perform crucial roles in the promotion and protection of human rights. We are however concerned by the financial constraints faced by the mandate holders in carrying out their mandate and we call on the General Assembly to allocate adequate resources to the special procedures from the regular UN budget. A situation where 45 percent of the funding for special procedures comes from voluntary contributions is certainly not ideal. Nigeria supports the work of the Special Procedures and at our review on 22nd October, 2013, we issued an open invitation for all thematic mandate holders to visit Nigeria.

10. Nigeria recognizes the important role played by civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights. We see the considerable interest shown by NGOs in the activities of the Human Rights Council and we welcome the access that the Council grants them during its sessions. It is a fact that NGOs are allocated equal speaking time as Observer States at Council sessions. This demonstrates a remarkable degree of openness on the part of the Council and a willingness to ensure that the voice of the people is heard.

11. Nigeria remains committed to working in a constructive manner with all delegations towards advancing the work of the Human Rights Council. We look forward to the 10th of December, 2013 when the General Assembly will commemorate and celebrate the International Human Rights Day, as well as the 20th Anniversary of both the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

12. I thank you.