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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER

AT THE

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

ON AGENDA ITEM 63: REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

NEW YORK, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2014
Mr. President,

My delegation warmly welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Baudelaire Ndong Ella, to New York for this important event – the presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council. We commend and thank Ambassador Ella for his leadership of the Human Rights Council, just as we commend and thank his predecessor, Ambassador Henczel for his contributions to advancing the work of the Council. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Mauritania on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. President,

2. Nigeria, as a democratic country, attaches great importance to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, not only within our country, but across the world. It is for this reason that we are actively engaged with the Human Rights Council and are interested in seeing that the Council achieves the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, which is to promote and protect fundamental human rights. It is also for this reason that we sought re-election to the Council this year. We thank all Member States for supporting our candidature.

3. We are pleased to note the substantial effort the Council has put into achieving its mandate. The fact that the Council meets in three annual regular sessions, as well as special sessions, allows it to devote attention to global human rights issues in a timely and effective manner. The various special procedures of the Council are also significant in this regard. The wide range of issues contained in this report of the Council and even the sheer volume of the report are a reflection of the complexity and multiplicity of issues that the Council has to deal with.

4. We urge that the work of the Council should continue to be guided by resolution 60/251 and solidly grounded on the fundamental principles underpinning the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. While we see the Council as a unique tool for the protection and promotion of all human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social or
cultural, we also hold the view that a focus on economic, social and cultural rights might be the Council's own contribution towards assisting States to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

5. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has so far proven to be quite successful. It is remarkable that since the first session of the UPR Working Group in February 2008, this mechanism has attracted a large percentage of participation by States. The second cycle of the UPR has indeed reinforced the importance of the UPR mechanism as a means of promoting and protecting human rights across the world.

6. We are pleased to note the substantial increase in the number of standing invitations issued to Special Procedures mandate holders, and the growing number of States ratifying the core human rights instruments. Nigeria is one of the countries that has issued such a standing invitation. This is a demonstration of our commitment to work with the Council as it pursues its mandate.

Mr. President,

7. The considerable number of resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council during the current year is a reflection of the wide array of issues that the Council has to deal with. However, it is a fact that these resolutions come with programme budget implications which create challenges of funding. Nigeria therefore supports the call for the General Assembly to significantly improve funding for the work of the Council. We also call on the General Assembly to address the financial constraint faced by the Special Procedures mandate holders appointed by the HR Council, in carrying out their mandate.

8. Nigeria would like to acknowledge the fact that people across the world expect the United Nations to protect their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We see evidence of this in the active participation of non-governmental organizations in the activities of the Human Rights Council. We welcome the Council's engagement with NGOs as a way of allowing the voice of the people to be heard. We wish also to see greater attention paid by the
Council to the human rights situations in all non-self governing territories, especially with the aim of holding the administrating powers to their commitment to prepare such territories for full independence.

Mr. President,

9. We note with concern the growing number of resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council that include issues that are not part of the universally agreed human rights norms. We caution the Human Rights Council to remain within the boundaries of discussing agreed human rights issues and not stray into areas that are intrinsically divisive, controversial and that does not reflect well on the Council's integrity and esteem. The Council should remain the respected and cherished instrument for promoting universal respect for the protection of all agreed human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, its reports should be devoid of any issue that could reflect divisive opinions or impose obligations on Member-States which they could not faithfully implement because they conflict with the values of their people.

10. Finally, we would like to underscore the importance of the cooperation of States in advancing the work of the Human Rights Council and we seize this opportunity to affirm our unwavering commitment to cooperate with all States in this regard. We look forward to the commemoration by the General Assembly of the International Human Rights Day, on 10th December, 2014 and the launching of the International Decade of People of African Descent.

I thank you.