STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE


NEW YORK, 8TH JUNE, 2015
Mr. President,

Nigeria associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf the African Group, by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Rwanda. We join other delegations in congratulating you for convening this important meeting. You can count on the support of my delegation in the discharge of your immense duties. I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his report, which contains important recommendations for achieving our objective of a HIV and AIDS-free world. The statements by the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Mr. Michel Sidibé, also provide great insight to our discussions today. The participation of various stakeholders such as youth, women, the private sector and people living with HIV are all crucial to our collective endeavour.

2. The “Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS” of 2001 and the follow-up “Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS” of 2006 and 2011, all of which Nigeria is proud to have been actively involved in their adoption, mark the determination of the international community, never seen before on any single disease condition, to wage a global and sustained war on HIV and AIDS. Immense progress has been made, thanks to our collective determination, to the extent that HIV is now better understood, and AIDS is no longer an automatic death sentence. Yet, a lot remains to do.

3. HIV still remains of growing global concern, particularly in Africa where HIV and AIDS constitute a heavy financial burden, a social nightmare and developmental disaster. The disease knows no race, age or sex. In addition, women are at a much higher risk of contracting HIV because of their biological make-up and how vulnerable they are seen to be within their communities. Three young women are infected for every man in sub-Saharan Africa while girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are six times more likely to be HIV positive compared to boys the same age. This disease is also a leading cause of maternal and child mortality in the African region. As a result, greater attention must be given to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

4. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General that promoting gender equality and empowering women constitute an integral part of the global AIDS response. We acknowledge the need to address the structural gender barriers and negative power relationships that influence the ability of women and girls to
confront the challenge of HIV. We share the view that critical action is needed to ensure that young women and girls can access and remain in education; that women feel safe and have control over their own sexual health; that women are engaged to a greater extent in leadership, decision-making and service provision; and that there is greater promotion of women's legal rights and access to justice.

Mr. President,

5. In spite of Nigeria's unflinching commitment to all national, regional and global initiatives on HIV and AIDS, a high population and limited financial and technological resources make the fight against the pandemic a major challenge for Nigeria, placing, in particular, a heavy burden on the health care delivery system. We however continue to rise to the challenge, making considerable progress in the process.

6. Some of the successes of which we are particularly proud include the National Health Bill passed into law on 19th February 2014. The bill provides a Framework for the Regulation, Development and Management of a National Health System. This is aimed at setting standards for rendering health care services.

7. In addition, on 10th April 2014, the Federal Parliament passed the HIV and AIDS Anti-Stigma and Discrimination Bill. This Bill seeks to prevent the stigmatization of and discrimination against those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Moreover, on 25th March 2015, the Federal Government passed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill into law. The VAPP bill provides a legislative and legal framework for the prevention of all forms of violence against vulnerable persons, especially women and girls. This new law seeks to eliminate violence in private and public life and provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims of violence, and punishment of offenders.

8. As a demonstration of our determination to strengthen regional cooperation, Nigeria hosted the Abuja + 12 Special Summit of the African Union on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in July 2013. We will continue to play an
active role in vigorously supporting these objectives and their beneficial advancement.

Mr. President,

9. Prevention also remains a major concern, as there is still relatively low access to Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission services in rural areas, even as stigmatization and discrimination pose barriers to universal access to services. Furthermore, national ownership and sustainability of response continue to be undermined by limited and unpredictable funding. We remain committed nonetheless. Our new Administration, while building on the success of previous governments, is determined to provide new impetus for advancement and development, and consider the health sector as a key component and target of our human development agenda.

10. We expect that these national efforts would be complemented, not replaced, by support from development partners, the UN system and donors. Our international cooperation strategy would not be restricted to the usual major donors; rather we would seek to expand it to include greater collaboration at the regional, continental and south-south levels.

11. In conclusion Mr. President, to say that adequate funding is critical to the success of our HIV and AIDS strategy is an understatement. Many countries, including mine, could not achieve the noble goals of our declarations, nor the MDGs, without the support of our development partners. While appreciating their cooperation and assistance, we call on them to make every effort to fulfill their obligations early, in view of the need to develop a formidable post 2015 development agenda. We also call for flexibility and understanding on the issue of transfer of technology and training in the production and distribution of HIV/AIDS-related drugs and devices.

I thank you.