PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT SECRETARY (CABINET SECRETARIAT)
The Presidency, Abuja

AT THE

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

ON AGENDA ITEM 65 a & b: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF
THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

NEW YORK, 18TH OCTOBER, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of this agenda item which seeks to accentuate the promotion and protection of rights of children. We thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives, as well as the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Executive Director UNICEF, for their reports.

2. In particular, we welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General and agree that providing girls with skills, knowledge and a say in processes and decisions that affect them significantly contributes to improving their lives. We also agree that it is imperative that accountability mechanisms be introduced and promoted to provide appropriate information and adequate support for children to express their views in matters that affect them, as called for by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We are pleased with the results achieved so far through the collaboration among different actors in the United Nations system in the area of child protection.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Nigeria's laws and policies on the promotion and protection of the rights of children reflect our commitment to the relevant international instruments to which we are signatory. The Government is determined to create the enabling environment to provide children with equal opportunities, protect their rights and facilitate their full participation in society. A National Child Policy has been approved to further facilitate the actualization of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Child’s Rights Act.

4. A National Priority Agenda for vulnerable children 2013 – 2020 has also been developed as a strategic framework to guide the multi-sectoral operationalization of the Vision 20:20:20 strategies and objectives of ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children in Nigeria. In addition, Nigeria in conjunction with development partners is providing quality services to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in seven thematic areas of education, health, shelter and care, nutrition, protection, psycho-social support and household economic strengthening.
Mr. Chairman,

5. The Nigerian education system has undergone major reforms, with the revised 2008 National Policy on Education focusing mainly on inclusive education of children and youth with special needs in regular schools. The Policy calls for access of special needs children, with their varying abilities to education in conducive and less restrictive environments, as well as the education of such children to enable them achieve self-fulfillment. The commitment to inclusive education evolved out of the realization that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, or capabilities.

6. Furthermore, various strategies have been put in place by Government such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme which guarantees nine years uninterrupted free compulsory formal education for all children, from the primary level up to the first three years of High School. This scheme is monitored by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). The UBEC Law Section 15 stipulates a nine-year formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skill acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl child and women, street children and the disabled.

7. Nigeria is also reviewing its various laws on inter-country adoptions with a view to complying with the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption. We have taken steps to establish Family Courts to deal with cases of children as opposed to the current trend where cases involving both children and adults are heard in conventional courts.

Mr. Chairman,

8. The state of health of children is an important factor in assessing the level of development of any nation. In our effort to address infant and child mortality, the Government has adopted the Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy to reduce childhood morbidity and maternal mortality. The strong collaboration and partnership among key agencies of Government on maternal and Child Health interventions has also gone a long way to boost the
sensitization of policy makers, religious, traditional and opinion leaders to appreciate the need for all stakeholders to work in a collaborative manner in order to address the infant and child mortality rates in Nigeria.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Nigeria is committed to addressing the challenges of violence and other forms of exploitation facing children such as trafficking, forced marriages, rape and abduction. In this regard, we have ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

10. Trafficking in children, within Nigeria and across our borders, remains a major concern to us and we are working relentlessly to fight the scourge. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is charged with the responsibility of preventing trafficking, rehabilitating trafficked persons and prosecuting offenders. The Federal Government has signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour to establish shelter centers to rehabilitate trafficked children and reunite them with their families. In addition, government recently adopted the Child Labour Policy aimed at protecting children against all kinds of abuse in the workplace and all forms of labour that militate against the proper development of the child. This is in line with our approach to fighting human trafficking, which combines law enforcement with policies aimed at prevention of trafficking and protection of the victim.

11. In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm our unwavering commitment towards guaranteeing the promotion and protection of children’s rights in Nigeria.

12. I thank you.