

NIGERIA'S COUNTRY STATEMENT
DELIVERED BY HE DR. JERRY SONNY UGOKWE,
AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA TO AUSTRIA AND PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE IAEA AT THE FIFTY-SECOND
REGULAR SESSION OF THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE IN
VIENNA, AUSTRIA ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Nigerian Delegation, it is my pleasure to extend warm congratulations to you on your election as President of the Fifty-Second General Conference of the IAEA. My delegation wishes to assure you of its support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

My delegation wishes to acknowledge and appreciate the warm words of hope and solidarity from the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It is also my privilege and honour to seize this opportunity to express Nigeria's high consideration to all delegations present and to all IAEA Member States.

On behalf of the Nigerian Delegation, I join other delegations in welcoming the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea as new members of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Nigeria looks forward to the continuous enlargement of the membership of the IAEA, believing that such will foster and deepen international cooperation for the peaceful application of nuclear technology for societal development and the maintenance of world peace through the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. President,

Nigeria appreciates the excellent work being done by the IAEA under the able leadership of the Director-General, Dr. Mohammed El-Baradei. The comprehensive reports on the various activities of the Agency in the past year have given us hope that cooperation and dialogue among Member States, underpinned by technological development and adherence to the basic tenets of safety and security and safeguards, will always engender world peace and progress. In this regard, we commend the Director-General and the Secretariat for the qualitative and dedicated service that the Agency continues to render to Member States.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank the Director General and members of the Board of Governors for the support and cooperation extended to Nigeria during her tenure as a member of the Board in the last two years. We would like to assure you of our support and cooperation to the incoming Board members.

Mr. President

Please permit me to reiterate the fact that, over the past five decades, the major pillars of the IAEA have been continuously fine-tuned to achieve the synergistic effect of harnessing the benefits of nuclear technology in a sustainable manner in harmony with the environment, while ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation wishes to inform that, Nigeria, being a developing country faced with the daunting task of providing for its populace the basic needs of modest living, is also aligning its developmental

objectives with the Agency's plank to effectively harness these benefits by the proper application of nuclear science and technology in partnership with the Agency. Thus, for over three decades, Nigeria has been participating in the Agency's Technical Cooperation (TC) programme. My country has benefited from this programme, particularly, in the areas of human resource development and capacity building.

We are grateful for the support and assistance of the Agency through the Technical Cooperation programme in the fields of energy planning; food and agriculture; medicine and human health, particularly in the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT); industry; mineral exploration and exploitation; environmental management; water resources management; and recently, electricity generation, among others. We will continue to partner with the Agency to develop sustainable programmes as well as promote regional cooperation through strengthening the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (AFRA).

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank the Agency for its support and assistance in the successful procurement and installation of the 1.7Mev Tandem Accelerator at the Centre for Energy Research and Development, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, which was commissioned a fortnight ago. The facility will be used for basic and applied research in food and agriculture, environmental studies, industry, material science and manpower training, among others.

Mr. President

Energy is known to be a major driver of the industrialization process which is a critical index of human development. However, many developing countries are in a state of energy crisis, and have initiated programmes to deploy nuclear power plants for electricity generation. Nigeria is significantly encouraged by the Agency's commitment to facilitating and supporting developing Member States to introduce nuclear power plants to their energy mix. Nevertheless, we wish to call on the IAEA to ensure that the support is transparent and unconditional within the framework of the Agency, and that Member States should have unfettered access to the development and deployment of the technology.

The government of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua has made it a priority to diversify and strengthen Nigeria's energy generation base beyond the current sources of oil, gas and hydro, to include nuclear electricity in order to drive our developmental process. Nigeria has thus, started the implementation of a programme to introduce nuclear into the energy mix. Nigeria is grateful for the catalytic role the IAEA under the able leadership of Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei has played in focusing our national interest in this endeavour.

In furtherance of this effort, Nigeria has commenced a number of preliminary activities in partnership with the Agency. These include identification and characterization of possible sites for the country's first nuclear power plants, development of the national capacity to build the needed manpower for the successful and sustainable implementation of the nuclear power programme, development and strengthening of the requisite regulatory platform, as well as developing a robust legal framework, which

would ensure commitment to safety, security, safeguard, environmental protection and fiscal responsibility for the introduction and operation of a sustainable nuclear power industry in the country.

Mr. President

Please permit me to reiterate the fact that Nigeria, as a responsible member of the international community, has acceded to all the relevant laws, treaties and conventions, and would pursue the implementation of its nuclear electricity programme in full compliance with the Agency's codes and guidelines on safety, security and safeguards. In this respect, I wish to add that Nigeria can only partner with Member States who share our common commitment to the basic tenets of the Agency and respect for international peace and security. We look forward to continued partnership and cooperation with the Agency and the international community to achieve our national objective to deploy nuclear power plants for electricity generation within the shortest possible timeframe.

Mr. President

Nigeria has manifestly demonstrated her commitment to compliance with international legal and regulatory requirements for Safety, Security and Safeguards in the use of nuclear energy. In this regard, it would be recalled that Nigeria was the second country to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and voted for its indefinite extension in 1995. She signed the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement in 1988 and ratified the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident in 1990.

Nevertheless, Nigeria is still working very hard to enthrone an enduring culture of nuclear safety, security and safeguards in all ramifications. As part of this effort, Nigeria, in 2006, promulgated the Nigerian Safety and security of Radioactive Sources Regulation and the National Policy on Radioactive Wastes and the Nigerian Waste Management Regulation. These we believe, are strong indication of our national commitment to address the country's radioactive waste issues in a coordinated and cooperative manner.

Mr. President,

Nigeria with a population of over 140 million and an estimated cancer incidence rate of about 100,000 new cases yearly, has in operation only five radiotherapy centres and two nuclear medicine facilities for the diagnosis and treatment of cancers. This is grossly inadequate and the country has embarked on upgrading the existing centres as well as establishing six additional radiotherapy centres and eight new nuclear medicine facilities in our tertiary hospitals. In this regard, Nigeria has recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Agency to integrate radiotherapy and nuclear medicine into the National Cancer Plan covering the period 2008 to 2013.

This we believe would further deepen the practice of radiotherapy and nuclear medicine for the management of cancer in the country. We are also working in partnership with the Agency and other development partners to grow the needed trained personnel; build the capacity to train all cadre of professionals locally so as to deliver the needed services efficiently for the optimal benefits of the patients.

Through the assistance of the Agency, Nigeria has developed significant capacity for the application of nuclear techniques in various fields. We look forward to the support and cooperation of the Agency in building regional and sub-regional capacities to enhance regional integration in the development and use of the various nuclear technology facilities in the country such as the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) at the Centre for Energy Research and Training (CERT), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; the Gamma Irradiation Facility (GIF) at the Nuclear Technology Centre (NTC), Sheda-Abuja; the 1.7Mev Tandem Accelerator at the Centre for Energy Research and Development (CERD), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; as well as the National Postgraduate Training Centre in Radiation Protection at the University of Ibadan.

Mr. President,

My delegation wishes to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the basic tenets of the NPT. All of Nigeria's nuclear activities are purely for peaceful purposes and are fully safeguarded. Nigeria's commitment to non-proliferation is further affirmed by its untiring effort, working in concert with other countries, to catalyze the process of full ratification and coming into force of the Pellindaba Treaty, which seeks to make Africa a nuclear weapons free zone. Nigeria is unequivocally committed to global peace and appreciates the pivotal role the IAEA plays in promoting non-proliferation.

We are, however, concerned that certain core NPT provisions, including Article IV with respect to the inalienable rights of all Parties to the Treaty to develop research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with the

Articles I, II, and III are being subjected to redefinition and reinterpretation.

My delegation wishes to express its conviction that proliferation concerns which are the objects of the Agency's safeguards and verification system, are best addressed in a transparent, comprehensive and in a non-discriminatory manner, through multilateralism. My delegation believes that the absence of a demonstrated commitment to nuclear disarmament on the part of some Nuclear Weapon States, portends not only a drawback to the full implementation of the NPT obligations by all States Parties, but is discriminatory and could erode the confidence of Member States in the Agency's safeguards and verification system.

Mr. President,

I wish to conclude by expressing Nigeria's appreciation of the support and assistance it continues to receive from the Agency and to reaffirm our abiding commitment to the ideals of the Agency in the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for sustainable development. I wish to thank the Director General for his unrelenting efforts in the advancement of nuclear non-proliferation through diplomacy for the maintenance of International peace and security.

Thank you.