



Address by

Her Excellency, Hajia Turai Umaru Yar'Adua

First Lady, Federal Republic of Nigeria

**At the 53rd Regular Session of the General Conference of the
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**

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Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I lead the Nigerian delegation to this 53rd regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I wish to begin by extending our warm congratulations to you and your country on your well-deserved election as the President of this General Conference. My delegation reposes great confidence in your leadership and is certain that your outstanding skills will guide this Conference to a successful outcome in strengthening the role and functions of the IAEA towards promoting the course of human development.

I would like to extend the courtesies of my delegation to the other members of the General Committee, and the host, the

Federal Republic of Austria. I also would like to greet the delegations of all Member States.

The Nigerian delegation wishes to commend the out-going Director General of the Agency, Dr. Mohammed El-Baradei, for his outstanding leadership during his twelve-year tenure. We wish to express our deep appreciation to him for his support and assistance for our national and regional programmes throughout his tenure. We wish him success in his future endeavours. We also most warmly congratulate the new Director General of the Agency, Mr. Yukiya Amano, for his election. We are aware of the tremendous leadership and diplomatic skills he brings to the position. Nigeria wishes to pledge her unalloyed support to him during his tenure and look forward to the continued support and assistance of the Agency in our national programmes.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the admission of the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Cambodia as new members of the Agency. It is our fervent hope that the continuous enlargement of the membership of the Agency would continue to promote the cause of fostering and strengthening international cooperation for the peaceful uses of

nuclear energy and deepen the culture of nuclear safety and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as strengthen the fulfillment of the three dimensional role of the agency.

Mr. President, one major fact that is often lost to public health policy formulators, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, is the fact that cancer has emerged as the number one cause of death. From the available data, cancer kills more people in Nigeria than malaria and HIV-AIDS combined. Thus, as a country, we are beginning to look towards the evolution of effective mechanisms to combat cancer, including the incorporation of Nuclear Medicine and Radiotherapy techniques for its diagnosis and management.

I wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, the assistance Nigeria has received from the IAEA in developing our national capacity to institutionalize and deepen the practice of nuclear medicine and radiotherapy as an important component of our national strategy for cancer control. This has given impetus to the intensified national effort to develop and implement a structured nuclear medicine and radiotherapy programme for

the diagnosis and management of cancer as a major plank of the National Cancer Control Programme.

Mr. President, Nigeria's commitment has manifested in the approval and implementation of two major projects in the health sector in the current triennium cycle (2009–2011) of the Technical Cooperation programme of the Agency. These include development and expansion of Nuclear Medicine facilities in ten tertiary hospitals, as well as strengthening of existing radiotherapy facilities in six of them. These facilities, when fully functional, are expected to provide the very much needed services to ameliorate the suffering of cancer patients and also function as veritable referral centres.

Mr. President, the Nigerian delegation wishes to inform the Conference that, two months back, under the auspices of my NGO, the foundation was laid for an International Cancer Centre (ICC) in Abuja, our Federal capital. Conceived as a private sector-driven enterprise, its primary objective is to provide a world-class facility for the diagnosis and management of cancer in Nigeria. It is our expectation that this project will

benefit from the expert services and professional advice of the Agency's *Programme of Action on Cancer Therapy (PACT)*.

Mr. President, as you are aware, many developing countries, particularly in Africa, are faced with massive infrastructure challenges which directly impact on the quality of life and threaten the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. In response to Nigeria's huge energy deficit, the Federal Government has made it a priority to diversify and strengthen the country's energy generation base beyond the current sources to include nuclear electricity. This is being driven through the agency of the *Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission (NAEC)* with full commitment to nuclear safety, security and safeguards in the implementation of our nuclear power programme.

Nigeria, through the *Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NNRA)* has developed wide ranging regulations and guidelines to ensure nuclear safety and radiation protection. Mr. President, in demonstration of our commitment to compliance with international legal and regulatory requirements for Safety, Security and Safeguards in the use of nuclear energy, we have

acceded and ratified the relevant treaties and conventions preparatory to the introduction of nuclear power in the country.

Mr. President, my delegation is indeed grateful for the assistance and support given by the Agency through its technical cooperation programmes in various areas of radiation applications to our national institutions. The nuclear research reactor and accelerator facilities installed and commissioned with the assistance of the IAEA are being operated and utilized towards addressing the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to the basic tenets of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the fact that Nigeria's nuclear activities are purely for peaceful purposes and are under safeguards.

Mr. President, Nigeria, as one of the initiators of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed it on April 11, 1996, and deposited the instruments on June 18, 2001. Nigeria wishes to commend the efforts of all African Countries that are signatories to the Treaty, and especially the step taken by Burundi for being the 28th nation to deposit its instrument of ratification thereby

causing its entry into force on the July 15, 2009. This calls for celebrations as the treaty ushers in the legality for enforcing the prohibition of nuclear weapons in the African Continent. This is clearly demonstrative of Africa's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear technology in all its ramifications for the continent's economic development and regeneration.

We wish to express our conviction that proliferation concerns are best addressed in a transparent, comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner, through multilateralism. We believe that the absence of a demonstrable commitment to nuclear disarmament on the part of some Nuclear Weapon States portends grave consequences for the full implementation of the NPT obligations by all State Parties. It is also 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.

You can be assured that Nigeria remains a committed member of the IAEA family and stands ready and willing to continue to support the Agency.

May God continue to bless our common humanity. Thank you.