



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

AT THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE**

NEW YORK, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2017

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group.
2. Permit me to congratulate His Excellency, Ambassador Mouayed Saleh on his assumption as the Chair of the First Committee at the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly. Given your wealth of experience in diplomacy, the African Group believes in your ability to steer the course of our work to a successful conclusion. The Group also congratulates other members of the Bureau on their election. The African Group commends your predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum, for his leadership and laudable efforts. The Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.
3. The 71st Session of this Assembly witnessed efforts to address a number of multilateral disarmament and international security issues, including issues related to cyberspace and outer space activities. International security has continued to deteriorate as the world faces immense challenges to peace and security, particularly the increased threats of terrorism. In this regard, the Group underscores the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy to address disarmament, non-proliferation and international security in accordance with the principles

and objectives enshrined in the UN Charter, and restates that there are no substitutes for multilateral approach to addressing global disarmament issues.

Mr. Chairman,

4. On September 20, 2017, the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature. This event marks a watershed in given the slow progress and frustrations that had characterized nuclear disarmament for so many years. The Group wishes to underscore that the Treaty, as adopted, reinforces the need for our commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to complement the treaty. As the international community awaits the realization of the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the African Group seeks more profound and concrete measures in pursuit of the objective of nuclear disarmament.

5. On the 26th September, the General Assembly convened the fourth General Assembly Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the "International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons". The meeting again served as a reminder of and underscored the existential threat posed to humanity, as long as nuclear weapon States continue to possess and modernize these weapons of mass destruction. The Group therefore welcomes and underscores the importance of resolution 70/34, as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

6. Seven decades have passed since the world witnessed the first ever use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastations and impact caused by the twin attacks continue to be borne, not only by the Hibakushas but also by all peoples around the globe, including the impact on the environment. Therefore, the time has come for the world to speak with unanimity towards ensuring a world free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. It is also the moment to raise our voices against the slow pace and the lack of good faith and commitment on the part of nuclear weapon States to dismantle these weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Early this year, States Parties gathered in Vienna, Austria for the First Preparatory Committee Meeting (PrepCom) of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Coming on the heels of the failure of the IXth Review Conference in 2015, which failed to yield the desired consensus on a final outcome document, despite concerted efforts of non-nuclear weapon States; particularly from Africa, we look forward to a positive engagement as States Parties prepare for Preparatory Meetings, as another unique opportunity to review steps taken since 2010, the last time this process produced a successful outcome. It also offered a platform to restate our commitment to the exceptional role of the NPT, as pivotal to our collective resolve to banish nuclear weapons from arsenals of states, prevent their proliferation and assess the impact of harnessing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and human progress, including through international

cooperation in line with Article 1V of the Treaty. The threat posed to humanity by the continued existence of nuclear weapon is real. In this regard, the African Group insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear weapons States in the context of the Treaty. The setback of the last review conference remains fresh and etched in our minds. It is therefore hoped that this disappointment would serve as a clear reminder on the need to renew commitments to the overall objective of the Treaty.

8. The African Group re-affirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as in their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world. The Treaty of Pelindaba, Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and Mongolia's Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Status, significantly contribute to the overall objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. They enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

9. In this context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba. Among other things, the Treaty re-affirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and provides a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting testing of those weapons on the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

10. In the same vein, the African Group restates its deep concern at the fact that commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East have not been implemented as agreed. The Group remains unequivocal in its disappointment of the inability to convene the agreed Conference on the establishment of the said zone in the Middle East, which should have held in 2012. The Group further stresses that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in that year. The Group wishes to highlight the validity of these commitments and obligations until their full implementation.

11. The African Group underscores the importance of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and stressed the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in this regard, by continuing to ensure commitments of States to the implementation of Safeguards Agreements and in the provision of technical assistance and cooperation through maximizing the use of science and technology for socio-economic development.

12. The African Group emphasizes the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons at this session,

particularly its serious concern of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group notes the strides made by States and other participants in the past three Conferences and continues to call on all States, particularly nuclear weapons States, to have in their consideration, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources among others, and take necessary measures and steps to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of these weapons. It is in this context that the Group strongly supports all efforts aimed at the total elimination and de-legitimization of Nuclear Weapons, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

13. The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons do not guarantee security; but an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including the outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is in this context that the Group stresses the need for the nuclear weapons States to cease their further modernization, upgrading, refurbishment, or extending the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

14. The African Group also stresses the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

(CTBT), bearing in mind the special responsibilities of Nuclear Weapons States in this regard. The Group believes that the CTBT offers a hope of halting further the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group welcomes the convening of the Tenth Ministerial Conference on the CTBT held in New York on 20th September 2017 and supports the international community, which has remained committed to promoting the CTBT and calls on nuclear weapon States and those yet to accede to the NPT, which are listed in Annex II of the Treaty and have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT, to do so without further delay.

15. The African Group joins other Member-States to reaffirm the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The Group expresses concern at the many years of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and calls on the CD to resume substantive work without further delay, taking into account the security interests of all States and without further delay.

16. The Group underscores great importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and welcomes the conclusion of work by Working 11 on the agenda items "Recommendations on practical confidence-building in the field of conventional weapons". The Group expresses regrets that consensus was not reached on the agenda item on nuclear disarmament and stresses the importance of the UN disarmament

machinery as an integral aspect of multilateral disarmament. It underscores the significance, not only of preserving the Commission, but in the realization of its deliberative objectives. The Group looks forward to a successful deliberation on the elements of the Agenda Items as it begins its next cycle.

Mr. Chairman,

17. The African Group acknowledges the efforts by Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since its entry into force, as well as the third successful Conference of States Parties held in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2017. The Group urges States Parties to the Treaty to implement in a balanced and objective manner and one which protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their self defence and security needs in accordance with the UN Charter. The full implementation of the treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group acknowledges that unregulated conventional arms transfer to unauthorized recipients fuels the illicit trade and urges major arms suppliers to ratify the treaty and promote its implementation.

18. The African Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many

regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa. The Group remains committed to the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in All Its Aspects.

19. Having successfully concluded the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 6) on the implementation of the UN PoA on SALW in June last year, and looking forward to the Third Review Conference in 2018, the Group urges all States to continue to fulfill their obligations regarding reporting, technological transfer, and by ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the UN PoA on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

20. This year marks the 31st anniversary of the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC). The Group welcomes the new helmsman, as he assumes the leadership of the centre. The Group assures him of full cooperation and constructive engagement. Despite a lean purse and limited resources among its several challenges, the Centre has continued to offer technical assistance and capacity building to States across the African region. The Group welcomes the undertaking by the Regional Centre to deepen its partnership with the African Union Commission in the context of the United Nations-African Union Framework for enhanced partnership in Peace and Security signed on 19 April, as well as with African sub regional organizations. The Centre needs our assistance in furthering and delivering its mandate. The Group wishes

to seize this opportunity to call for further assistance to bolster its efforts and ensure that the Centre continues in this momentum to deliver on its mandate.

21. Finally, Mr. Chairman, the African Group wishes to restate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group believes our deliberations in the coming days should be guided by the need to advance the work of the First Committee and enhance the course of peace.

22. The African Group will submit three resolutions in the course of our meetings for which we seek the support of all delegations. These are: **African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the United Nations, Prohibition of the Dumping of Radioactive Wastes and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa.**

I thank you for your attention.