

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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HEAD OF THE NIGERIAN DELEGATION
AT THE
15TH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES
COPENHAGEN**

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Dear Mr. President,

It is a measure of the satisfaction which my delegation feels about the beauty and generosity of the City of Copenhagen and the hospitality of the Government of Denmark that we remain optimistic that this Summit is too big and too special to fail.

Just looking at where humanity is coming from, after two centuries of aggravated carbon pollution, speaks volumes about the resilience of the human spirit to mend what has been broken. It is like we have all been sleep walking through glass doors until the retribution of nature in drought, mudslides, tsunamis, melting glaciers and disappearing lakes woke us up. We must henceforth stay awake if we are not to move towards the abyss again.

Mr President,

Nigeria fully endorses the African position and that of G77 and China to which we proudly belong. Yet what is at stake is of such historic proportion that COP15 cannot afford to fall apart into camps since all of humanity share a common future.

While we know who the big polluters are and have not forgotten the old adage that he who pollutes must pay, we believe there is enough blame to go around. No country is without responsibility. Copenhagen represents an opportunity for collective atonement. This is the only

approach that can prevent what is a crisis from becoming a catastrophe.

Mr. President,

Elsewhere in the world, commentators may be inclined to refer to climate change crisis as an existential threat. For us in Africa, it is the beginning of the Apocalypse that must be averted. Millennium Development Goals which were hardly on track now stand the risk of being completely de-railed unless the numbers are re-appraised in the context of more imaginative resources. Our degraded soil arising from climate change is certain to encourage the perpetual company of hunger and poverty unless a major intervention which can only come from outside Africa takes place.

Mr. President,

Let us not be under any illusion here; Copenhagen is not about Them versus Us; it is about a new humanity, finally realising that it faces the grim prospects of its own extinction if like the dinosaurs of climate change crisis of another age it fails to change its ways. There is no time to lose. By the middle of this century more than a billion people would be victims of water shortages and hunger including 600 million in Africa alone.

I understand the World Health Organisation has recently published figures to show that while we are here debating percentages of emissions that can be allowed right up to 2050, climate change, as of today, accounting for more than 150,000 deaths a year. Greenhouse Gas emissions may be the ultimate weapons of mass destruction if we go

home from Copenhagen without a deal that everyone can identify with.

There may be those who may think that they can proceed on their own steam with or without an agreement, but they will benefit from an African Proverb which admonishes, *"if you want to go quickly, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together"*. With the prospect of the Earth, our passenger vessel, going under with water through holes we made, unmindful of consequences, what will save us is solidarity, commitment and collective action.

Mr. President,

The Climate Change Crisis which we face is the product of a development path that cannot be sustained. The evidence of science is incontrovertibly strong to back this up. What is now required is the politics to do the right thing in Copenhagen. Our response from Nigeria is to remain firmly committed to the Bali Road Map which strategically launched an open and transparent two track negotiation process. We support the African Group position that these processes must result in two separate outcomes leading to an international instrument on the second commitment period of the KYOTO Protocol as well as long-term global action by all other countries.

Our expectation is that an ambitious emissions target must be met by Annex 1 Countries. It should no longer be an option for developed countries to delay making deep cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions. They should also support efforts by African Countries to adapt to the negative impact of Climate Change.

For us in Nigeria, Climate Change is not academic; it is uniquely real. We live it daily, whether in terms of aggressive desertification in Northern Nigeria that has virtually seen Lake Chad disappear, or in the form of gully erosions in Southern Nigeria that are swallowing up whole villages. And so, we come to Copenhagen with hope and determination to do something.

As Nigeria strives to develop its national economy, we are fully aware of the huge responsibility to address the incidence of carbon emissions through gas flaring in the oil sector. Much of this is gas that is inevitably associated with oil drilling that has created a major challenge for us which can only be addressed through an aggressive implementation of an ambitious gas master plan within the enabling framework in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), together with the National Adaptation Strategy and plan of action which will involve all stakeholders in the country. Nigeria stands ready to work with those partners within the public and private sectors that are willing to invest in this promising sector. We have chosen the facilities of the market in dealing with the challenge of climate crisis by putting a price on carbon arising from gas flaring. Such a market approach will shift emphasis away from investment in high carbon content assets and activities in Nigeria to a green economy over time. Indeed a bill for an Act of National Assembly in 2010 to end gas flaring has undergone third reading.

Accordingly, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), established under the KYOTO Protocol is a beacon of hope as we make gas flaring history in Nigeria. Through public-private sector cooperation anticipated by CDM, signatory

countries which face limits on their Greenhouse Gas emissions are able to invest in GHG production projects. In a developing country like Nigeria, this enables us to gain credits for off-setting their emissions at home. It is "an integrated approach to project selection combining carbon reduction targets with projects such as in the Gas Master Plan that increase employment opportunities, education, empowerment, accessibility for the poor, and technology transfer".

Since existing CDM projects in Africa are not up to five percent of world-wide total, we call for an expansion of these facilities so that we can leverage on them to achieve zero level status for gas flaring in Nigeria. As already stated, there is currently a bill in the National Assembly that is addressing this challenge.

Our recent Niger Delta challenge that saw unrest in the region until a historic conflict resolution marked by a successful amnesty deal has taught us that pollution is not only about economics, it is also about peace and liveability. May that also be the heritage of COP15.

Thank you