



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT ENTITLED "IMPLEMENTING
THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT"**

NEW YORK, JULY 23, 2009

Mr. President,

The Nigerian delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report A/63/677 entitled "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect" as a useful basis for continuing the dialogue on ways and means to ensure the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect.

It was in response to the genocide in Rwanda, massacres in Srebrenica, Cambodia's killing fields, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, the Holocaust, etc, that in 2005 world leaders solemnly affirmed that "each individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity". They agreed that the international community should assist States to enhance their capacity to exercise their responsibility to protect. They also agreed that when a state is manifestly failing to protect its population from these four crimes, the international community has the obligation to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner through the Security Council and in accordance with the UN Charter. This commitment made under paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Outcome Document was later reaffirmed by the Security Council at Paragraph 4 of its resolution 1674.

The Secretary-General's report is therefore a step in the right direction towards implementation of the vision set out by our leaders in 2005. The report's three-pillar approach consisting of the protection responsibilities of the State, international assistance and capacity building and timely and decisive response, is drawn from the equally three-pronged agreement of the world leaders as encapsulated in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Outcome Document. These paragraphs can be said to constitute the authority within which Member States, regional and sub-regional arrangements and the UN system and its partners can seek to give a doctrinal, policy and institutional life to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Mr. President

The concept of the Responsibility to Protect is not new since it is based on international humanitarian and human rights law. Its essence is captured under article 4(h) of the African Union Constitutive Act. Certain instruments adopted and actions taken by countries within the West African sub-region under the auspices of ECOWAS could be considered as precursors of the R2P. For example, the ECOMOG interventions and other diplomatic initiatives helped to stop decisively the carnage in certain countries in the sub-region and to rescue trapped populations. The ECOWAS sub-region has in addition developed other frameworks such as the ECOWAS Plan of Action for the Combating of illicit drug trafficking, the Moratorium on the importation and exportation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs). In order to make it legally-binding, the Moratorium has been transformed into a Convention which is expected to come into force in the near future. The ECOWAS sub-region is divided into four early warning

24

zones for the purpose of detecting brewing crisis and taking preventive action. The UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) has been collaborating with the states in the community individually and collectively in this regard.

The ECOWAS also supports civil society groups such as the West African Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the West Africa Civil Society Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect because a strong civil society is fundamental to the consolidation of the rule of law. The ECOWAS established the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) as a platform to engage the civil society. The West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) has an MoU with ECOWAS to strengthen the region's early warning systems. The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) works to build the capacity of civil society to engage on policy issues at the regional level. The Institute serves as the focal point on the Responsibility to Protect in West Africa.

Nigeria has played a leading role in the peaceful resolution of conflicts within the West African sub-region. At the domestic level, the Nigerian Government has taken steps to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. Through national dialogue, inter-faith and inter-cultural programmes, harmony is promoted and incitement is discouraged or prevented. We remain actively engaged in peacekeeping operations around the world. In consonance with the notion of "Sovereignty as Responsibility", we believe that emphasis should be placed on prevention rather than on intervention.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis on the need for the international community to assist states with capacity building in the areas of the rule of law, good governance, security sector reform, etc, to enable national governments to exercise their responsibility to protect and not to wait for states to fail in this responsibility and then to intervene when it may be too late. To this end, we call on the UN and the international community to support the implementation of the AU Framework for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development intended to prevent countries emerging from conflict from relapsing into conflict thereby complementing the work of the Peace Building Commission.

Mr. President,

We call on the Secretary-General to elaborate further on some of the tentative proposals and recommendations in his report. There is the need for assistance for regional organizations such as the AU to implement the R2P which is already enshrined in its Constitutive Act. We also call for the strengthening of the Prevention and Early Warning Mechanism in the ECOWAS and the AU including the NEPAD with emphasis on conflict prevention, good governance and the promotion of peace and security. Equally important is the need to support the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) under which countries voluntarily submit themselves to scrutiny by regional neighbours to see if they are meeting benchmarks for good governance and addressing

root causes of conflict such as lack of rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance, and which is also aimed at strengthening popular participation in governance at the grass roots level etc.

Mr. President,

Today's debate should not have the effect of rolling back, weakening or undermining the 2005 consensus, but should rather aim at strengthening that commitment to ensuring the more effective implementation of the R2P. In this regard, my delegation supports the retaining of this item on the UN Agenda and looks forward to participating constructively in the dialogue within this Assembly and the UN system as a whole towards operationalizing the concept of the R2P.

I thank you