



STATEMENT

BY

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DURING

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Mr. Chair,

I would like to begin by commending you and the members of your esteemed bureau for the organization of this year's ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) under this exceptionally challenging circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic. My delegation aligns itself with the statement by the Permanent Representative of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

2. 2020 marks the seventy-fifth year since the establishment of the United Nations. By creating this foremost multilateral institution, the world reposed its faith upon it for a more peaceful, more just and more humane world, where no country is left to its own devices in the face of a vicious and destructive force, where no group is met with the real threat of extinction, and where no person is deprived of his or her basic dignity, which is fundamentally and inalienably anchored upon and expressed through our human rights. That faith in global solidarity and unity is, once again, being tested, seventy-five years later, albeit under the different circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Given this critical context where the eyes of the world are justifiably upon us again, and in recognition of the fact that our Organization, the United Nations, exists for the promotion of the well-being of the peoples of the world, it is most fitting that this year's HAS is holding under the theme: *“Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles.”* Through this apt theme, we shall continue to reaffirm, by our collective disposition and action, the relevance and, indeed, the raison d'être of our Organization.

Mr. Chair,

4. The COVID-19 pandemic has radically unclothed the inequalities, inequities and vulnerabilities that exist within and amongst societies. It has placed the magnifying glass on our weakest links, thereby pointing to where humanitarian actions are most urgently needed. The highly contagious nature of COVID-19 has also shown the great personal risks that humanitarian workers undertake in service of humanity.

5. In this regard, my delegation applauds the heroism of all frontline workers, especially those who are still, at this every time, engaged in the dangerous, and often thankless, work of humanitarian service. I must also express my delegation's appreciation to the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations in reaching those in far-flung, remote, and neglected regions of the world. I commend the leadership of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as well as the particularly important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These are critical times, and we must all stand up to be counted amongst the supporters of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters who are looking up to us at this very moment.

Mr. Chair,

6. At this critical juncture, if we are to show the relevance of the United Nations to the peoples of the world by taking action for people-centred solutions, reinforcing humanitarian assistance, and strengthening humanitarian coordination, effectiveness and efficiency, we must clearly define those who must be the focus of our humanitarian actions and strive to meet their needs. Very importantly, we must ensure that no one is left behind, and no group falls through the cracks. That is why the United Nations, through its relevant agencies and offices, must maintain a critical vigilance to ensure that migrants, refugees, returnees and IDPs are not left behind, as countries

continue to struggle to address the impact of COVID-19 on their citizens. This essential role would require courage underpinned by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

7. To address the plight of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons and thereby save lives, reach those in need and reduce humanitarian risk, we must act both strategically and tactically. But we must also act with a sense of urgency.

8. In the context of COVID-19, humanitarian assistance cannot be the victim of long-termism. Only the living can be catered for tomorrow. Accordingly, prepositioned resources must be urgently delivered to those most in need, especially migrants, refugees, returnees and IDPs. This requires collaboration by all actors, because genuine partnerships will not only ensure effectiveness and efficiency but will also guarantee that no one is left behind.

Mr. Chair,

9. While mindful of the necessity for global solidarity and international cooperation, especially in the context of the current global pandemic, Nigeria also recognizes that the task of attending to the needs of Nigerian citizens, migrants, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons is primarily that of the Nigerian Government. We understand that local authorities must take the lead. Partners are there to support not supplant Government's efforts. So, we are happy to reaffirm that the Nigerian Government continues to take an enviable leadership role in tackling the challenges back home through several homegrown initiatives.

10. In this connection, it is noteworthy that, having due consideration for the humanitarian needs of Nigerians and residents of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 21st August 2019, took the prescient step of establishing the Federal Ministry of

Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development. This new ministry is charged with developing humanitarian policies and providing effective coordination of national and international humanitarian interventions in and by Nigeria; ensuring strategic disaster mitigation, preparedness and response; and managing the formulation and implementation of fair and focused social inclusion and protection programmes.

11. Accordingly, the Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Management and Social Development, has taken several decisive steps to meet the humanitarian needs of Nigerians and residents of Nigeria during this global pandemic, in a manner that is inclusive and in collaboration with other partners. Such steps include ensuring the continuation of the social investment programmes, the extension of the homegrown school feeding programme to pupils even while they are at home, as well as the provision of COVID-19 palliatives and essential supplies to the most vulnerable, especially women and persons with disabilities. These humanitarian actions were taken alongside the necessary public health measures to ensure the overall well-being of Nigerians and Nigerian residents, especially the most vulnerable.

Mr. Chair,

12. As I conclude, I would like to reiterate that, seventy-five years ago, the world reposed its faith on the United Nations to ensure that never again would any country, any person or group of persons be left alone to their own devices in the face of a vicious and destructive force. The premise of that faith was global solidarity and unity. Today, the justification of that faith is being tested anew by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rising to the occasion requires international cooperation and partnerships, as it did seventy-five years ago. It requires cooperation in the form of providing quality and affordable access to diagnostics, medicines, vaccines and health technologies. It also requires

cooperation in the form of debt relief and even outright debt cancellation for developing countries to enable them to meet their national and international obligations. And, in the context of humanitarian assistance, it requires cooperation in the form of ensuring that the most vulnerable are not left behind, especially migrants, refugees, returnees and IDPs.

I thank you.