

**STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, TO THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOENERGY, 3<sup>RD</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2008, ROME, ITALY**

Chairman, Heads of State and Government,  
The Secretary – General of the United Nations,  
Ministers and Other Representatives of Countries,  
Director-General of FAO,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. Chairman, let me start my statement by conveying to you the felicitations, goodwill and fraternal greetings of the good people of Nigeria especially the farming communities whose daily toil ensure food security for over 140 million Nigerians.

2. With growing scientific evidence showing the devastating effects of climate change and global warming, the current status of food insecurity especially in the developing world will become worse if adequate measures are not put in place immediately.

3. One of the sectors most sensitive to global warming, and biofuel development is Agriculture; agricultural productivity in general could decline by between 10 to 25 per cent. It is also predicted that the decline of yield in rain-fed agriculture in most countries could be as much as 50 per cent.

4. Therefore Nigeria and Africa, being more than 90% dependent on rain fed Agriculture is highly at risk especially in the areas of food and nutrition security, poverty and hunger reduction, economic development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

5. Nigeria has a highly diversified agroecological condition with a total agricultural Land of 79 million ha, Surface water of 267 billion cubic meters, Underground water of 57.9 billion cubic meters, and a potential Irrigable area of 3.14million ha. Despite Nigeria's rich agricultural resource endowment, less than 50% of the country's cultivable agricultural land is under cultivation. Even then, about 14 million smallholder and traditional farmers who use rudimentary production techniques cultivate most of this land with only 220,000 ha. of actual irrigated area.

6. In response to these overwhelming issues and in order to halt the threats of rising food prices and to ensure increased production of staple food commodities in Nigeria in the short term, we released assorted grains

for sale at subsidized prices from the National Strategic Reserve. Nigeria has temporarily removed tariff on rice importation, initiated the accelerated completion of storage facilities, distributed increased quantity of fertilizers and seeds at subsidized rate, and syndicated special funds at very low interest rate, long term moratorium and repayment period for rice processing and marketing.

7. Nigeria is currently repositioning agriculture in the global best practices and increasing budgetary allocation for Agriculture has been enhanced from 3% to 7% of total budget in 2008, and in the shortest possible time to increase to 10% in consonance with Maputo declaration on Agriculture. In addition to the budgetary allocation, Nigeria is dedicating 1.68% of its federation account as a special intervention fund for agricultural development in the next four year with a takeoff fund of about \$700m. The special intervention programme has taken an agricultural value chain approach, covering production, processing, and storage and market development in an integrated fashion with the strengthening of Research & Development capabilities.

8. In the area of production there is major emphasis on ensuring that production inputs (such as fertilizers, seeds and seedlings, agricultural credit, extension support, land preparation support through tractor hiring service provision etc) reach farmers, at subsidized affordable prices. Efficient Water Resource Management and provision of irrigation facilities are key objectives of this programme. In the area of processing the plan is to encourage private sector driven agro-industrial parks and cottage industries.

9. Nigeria is also set to mitigate global warming effects through Aforestation & Reforestation, Integrated Water Management and the promotion of Biofuels using Jatropha and Cassava as feedstock. Nigeria is currently the World's largest producer of cassava. (about 50 million tons was produced in 2007 and moving to 60mt in 2009). The promotion of Jatropha plantations is partly due to the need to use up the over 3 million hectares of degraded non-arable land in the Sudano Sahelian areas of the Country and its income generating capability for the rural poor especially women. Using cassava as a feedstock is part of the strategy to sustain its increased local production without jeopardizing cassava food production as over 1 million additional hectares will be open, cultivated and dedicated as cassava for ethanol.

10. Hopefully, Nigeria's new initiative in agricultural development will enable Nigeria not only meet its domestic food requirement but also to increase its export to Africa and other parts of the World. Indeed Nigeria

has the potential to become the food basket of Africa. Therefore developing agriculture in Nigeria to its full potential is assuring food security for Africa.

11. Ladies and gentlemen, our most pressing problem in Nigeria and indeed Africa is improved yield, value addition, modern and structured market, access and affordability of credit. The global food crisis is a wakeup call for Africa to launch itself into green revolution which has long been over delayed. Our clarion call is for our friends to join hands with Africa and support Africa to achieve its food security programme as enunciated in NEPAD Comprehensive Africa's Agricultural Development Programme and the AU Maputo declaration of funding agriculture. The time to act is now. Enough of the rhetorics, and more of the action now. We look forward to seeing more attention than that given to weapons of mass destruction. Hunger is more devastating than weapons of mass destruction; we need to see more attention than to food Security than war on terror. Fighting hunger is much more important than fighting on war on terrorism. On account of these considerations,

- ✓ Every second a child dies of hunger
- ✓ Everyday 25 die of hunger related ailments
- ✓ Every day over 860 million people go to sleep hungry
- ✓ Over 1 billion of the world's population has under \$1 for a living.
- ✓ World population is to rise to 7.2 Billion by 2015.
- ✓ There is no weapon of mass destruction than hunger and poverty.
- ✓ Terror to humanity means tolerating hunger and poverty.
- ✓ There is no threat to human threat much more to HIV/AIDS than hunger and poverty

Tolerating hunger and poverty is unacceptable. It is unfair, unjust, and a potential danger to the one planet that we must collectively partner to protect. There must be investment in Agriculture in Africa by the advanced developed economies.

The announcements of Japan and France for alleviation of the current food security crisis is commendable and in the right direction. However, in actualizing the deployment of this fund, accessibility, affordability and round tripping are of great concern. In this light we strongly suggest that IFAD should be the vehicle for the deployment of all these funds, in view of its tract record of value for money, its reaching the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable groups.

12. Ladies and Gentlemen, Nigeria seeks strong partnership for its agricultural development programme in the areas of biotechnology for improved yield in crops, livestock and fisheries, and market development. At this juncture I want to pay particular attention to market information development for Africa which hitherto is either nonexistence or very weak.

Developing this system will not only open or link Africa market to the rest of the World; it has the potential of stimulating agricultural production in Africa and engendering best practice in Africa and thereby making Africa Agriculture competitive.

13. We, also seek to partner with FAO, World Bank, ADB and other donor/investment partners to support Nigeria in developing factory driven commercial farming by providing, for Nigeria, a US\$1 billion grant/loan facility at highly concessionary terms. This large scale commercial farming will have direct linkage with the existing small scale farmers to boost production, support processing and provide market outlets.

14. Another area that support is needed is in Agro-processing. This is necessary to cut the current high post harvest losses and increase the current low processing capabilities. For example, although Nigeria has over 2.5 million metric tons of paddy rice available in country, due to processing constraints, there has been need to import rice for local consumption. We request the development partners to support the development of this industry in Nigeria by financing credit facilities for private sector driven initiatives.

15. While I call on the World Trade Organization to fast track conclusion of the Doha Round of talks before the end of this year, let me also commend the FAO's US\$1.7 billion initiative on "soaring food prices" launched last year to give farmers access to appropriate inputs for intervention in some countries. The initiative of the UN and its task force on food security and the setting aside of \$100 million reserve for food, World Food programme additional \$755million fund, IFAD additional \$200million to poor farmers and World Bank \$1.2billion Rapid Financing Facility is highly commendable.

16. Mr. Chairman, I also wish to unburden my mind on this recurring question of why Africa has not been able to fully enjoy the provisions of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol despite the huge carbon trading at the global level. We, in Nigeria, see huge opportunities and potential in the implementation of the CDM of the Kyoto Protocol to leverage agricultural development in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. As sub Saharan African Countries, which depend on rain fed agriculture, undoubtedly Climate Change will negatively impact Agricultural Development in this region. Therefore the terms and conditions of implementing CDM will need to be reviewed especially in the Agricultural sector to favour Africa and enable it take advantage of its accruing benefits. Perhaps the place to start for a large chunk of the

US\$10 billion announced by Japan for the Cool Earth Partnership to be devoted to Agricultural Development In Africa.

17. Ladies and Gentleman, It is my sincere belief that the commitment of international community to the problem of food security and poverty eradication though commendable has left a big gap as total amount pledged so far is far short of the US\$10billion FAO annual estimated requirement or the over US\$15 billion to \$US20billion for effective tackling of the problem. I, therefore strongly urge for further commitments by the international communities for this most important global issue confronting all of us. I also call for a reformed, much stronger, pro-poor and a vibrant FAO. We look forward to FAO that is the hope for all and not a few, and that which will be more of a platform of action and a bastion of hope for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable.

18. Mr. Chairman, Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

**Rome, Italy.**

**4<sup>th</sup> of June, 2008**