



NIGERIA NATIONAL STATEMENT

U.S-AFRICAN LEADERS SUMMIT
WASHINGTON, DC, 5-6 AUGUST 2014

We thank President Barrack Obama for convening the first-ever U.S-African Leaders Summit. This worthwhile initiative is a credit to his commitment to building and sustaining collaborative ties between the United States and Africa.

2. Being the first Summit level dialogue of its kind, there is understandable excitement about what the Governments of the United States and African countries can achieve working together on shared goals and priorities. Indeed, this Summit is well-timed, given the range of complex challenges confronting Africa at the present time.

3. Although there are country-specific priorities, the crises facing Africa are largely similar and cut across countries. These challenges are multifaceted. At their root are poverty, security, governance, infrastructure and capacity issues. It is apparent that many African countries, including mine, are not going to meet all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Overcoming the various challenges on the road to meeting MDG targets and the post-2015 SDGs will require strengthened cooperation with the United States and other development partners.

4. We believe that poor governance is a major cause of conflict in Africa. This is often exacerbated by closed political processes in several of our countries. We would therefore, do well to scale up efforts to nurture viable and capable States in our continent. We must have States that are able to provide security and ensure the equitable distribution of public goods and services. Africa must also institutionalize the principles of political pluralism, good governance and respect for human rights.

5. We believe that a future of peace, stability and democracy would be greatly rewarding for the continent. Only in a democracy can Africa's ethnic, cultural and religious diversities find mutual accommodation and the freedom and opportunities that come with it.

6. Across Africa, the democratic process is on the move even though it has taken different turns and trajectories, with countries recording different levels of progress. On the whole, elections have become more regular even as we recognise that work remains to be done to deepen the democratic culture and strengthen its institutions across Africa.

7. Democracy, stability and prosperity are essential elements of Africa's nation building process requiring the support of the international community. We believe the U.S can support Africa's democratic rebirth, stability and creation of opportunities for millions across the continent.

8. The future belongs to our youth. The theme of this Summit, “*Investing in the Next Generation*”, is as appropriate as it is a call to action. President Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), complements Africa’s efforts to make the youth the centrepiece of our development agenda.

9. As the continent with the largest percentage of youth, to meet the yearnings and aspirations of our growing youth population, we have to continue to expand our economies, create wealth and employment opportunities. Africa cannot achieve this by depending on foreign aid from development partners, which has been declining in recent years. What Africa needs is real access to markets in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. African countries must, however, start with expanding intra-regional trade. In the global trade, Africa will require transiting from exporting raw materials and primary commodities to higher value finished and semi finished products.

10. To achieve this, policy reforms and economic diversification are important. That is why, in Nigeria, we embarked on far-reaching reforms in the Power, Agriculture and Industrial sectors, which aim at attracting private sector investments, diversifying our economy and building of our productive capacity. Africa needs to intensify its efforts on drivers for economic growth including human capital development, regional and global trade integration and its business environment. In this quest, Africa needs assistance in developing high value non-primary commodities to fully take advantage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Africa needs increased infrastructure and related services, including energy, transport, information and communication technology. In this regard, we welcome President Obama’s Power Africa Initiative which was launched in 2013. It is our hope that the Initiative will have wider coverage.

11. In addition to intra-State conflicts, several African countries, including Nigeria, are now challenged by terrorism and violent extremism. For several countries in the continent, terrorism has become a real threat to social progress, peace and security. Terrorism also threatens the continent’s state system and democracies.

12. The violent and criminal activities of Boko Haram in my country have captured the world’s attention. This has been especially so since the terrorist group abducted some girls from their school dormitory in the North-Eastern Nigeria in April. This vile act by Boko Haram in Nigeria typifies a dangerous trend by insurgent groups in the continent’s fragile security environment.

13. Boko Haram is more than a domestic terrorist group. The group is a threat to regional peace and security. This much was affirmed by the Special Summit on Security in Nigeria, hosted by President Francois Hollande in Paris in May, 2014. We now know that this insurgent group has grown into the Nigerian wing of *Al-Qaeda* with its international network linking terrorist groups in the Sahel and Mali and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Nigeria may be the epicentre of Boko Haram terrorist activities at the moment, but its affiliation with international terrorist networks, dramatically increases its capacity and reach beyond Nigeria's borders.

14. President Obama has described Boko Haram "as one of the most dangerous regional terrorist organisations in the world." Boko Haram kills anyone irrespective of gender, religion and age. It destroys everything in its sight. Since 2009, this terrorist group has killed over 12,000 Nigerians, and continues to maim many more as well as burn and raze down communities, places of worship, public institutions and infrastructure.

15. Nigeria is doing everything possible to combat Boko Haram and violent extremism. While we continue to enhance our intelligence and military capacities, we are, at the same time, working political solutions by engaging State Governments and local communities. We are seeking economic solutions through various economic empowerment and job creation programmes. We are creating economic opportunities and addressing the root causes of youth restiveness.

16. We are also building partnerships, both at the regional and international levels, to combat the threat posed by terrorism in our sub-region. In this enterprise, we are pleased to acknowledge the supportive role of the United States. The assistance that we continue to receive from the United States and our other international partners is proof indeed that partnership can multiply our strengths in addressing common challenges.

17. We are optimistic that continuing international support will help us rid our continent of the growing incident of terrorism. We call for an effective international sanctions regime that would hold accountable any country, institutions and individual that financed terrorism in any part of the world. This inaugural Africa-US Summit must call for effective action and implementation of all existing international protocols on this critical issue.

18. The rise of piracy is of utmost concern to us. Growing piracy in the Horn of Africa, the “ECOWAS space”, as well as in the Gulf of Guinea is undermining the fragile security of the countries of the zone. Across the region, piracy is dovetailing into other forms of organised crimes, including oil theft, hostage-taking, human and drug trafficking and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Regional efforts to forge initiatives to counter these dangers have so far proved ineffective, largely because these countries lack adequate and appropriate maritime surveillance and enforcement capabilities.

19. The security problems faced by the countries of Africa are transnational in scope. They, therefore, cannot be solved by one single country. The terrorism challenge in particular has posed gaps in individual nation’s capacities to deal with new complex security challenges. Because terrorism, piracy and transnational organised crimes are global in scope, they will require regional and international collaboration to combat. We must act in concert. U.S leadership on all these issues remains critical to successful outcome.

20. It is reassuring to have the U.S. Government pledge to enhance its partnership with Africa and to work with governments across the continent to address shared priorities. A large part of the task ahead would be to expand economic opportunities and enlarge the political space in our countries on the principles of popular participation, rule of law and respect for human rights. This is what all of Africa pledged to do in the Constitutive Act of African Union. I believe these values must remain at the centre of governance in Africa, if we are to achieve our goals of stability, security and development.