

STATEMENT BY

**CHAIRMAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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AT THE

**IAEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR SAFETY
VIENNA, AUSTRIA
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Mr. President and Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to start by conveying our heart-felt sympathy to the government and people of Japan for the 11 March 2011 natural disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant and the suffering it has brought with it.

2. My delegation wishes to commend the Director General of the IAEA, Mr. Yukiya Amano, for his well-informed initiative in convening this high-level meeting to discuss and draw lessons from the accident towards our collective efforts at ensuring the world enjoy the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology without a re-occurrence of such a devastating accident the nuclear community has just witnessed. I wish to assure you of the cooperation and support of my delegation towards the attainment of this objective.

3. The accident and its effects reverberate far beyond the shores of Japan casting doubts about the safety features of the operating fleet of nuclear power plants globally, and may eventually dampen the prospects of continued expansion in the sector, a proven source of meeting the global electrical energy needs, which in the recent past was seen to be on the rebound.

4. Without any coordinated international intervention, which this conference is a major part of, a predictable next step would be for some Member States to take hasty actions, which may impact negatively on the overall development and utilization of nuclear power worldwide in the immediate future. Thus, the timing of this meeting is quite apt, and its outcome

could yet assuage the apprehensions about nuclear safety in the minds of many, including in my country by the accident.

5. Consequently, the Nigerian delegation fully appreciates and associates with the overall objective of the Conference, which is to draw on the lessons learned thus far from the Fukushima Daiichi accident in order to strengthen nuclear safety throughout the world, as well as develop appropriate mechanisms to assess national, regional and international emergency preparedness and response capabilities with a view to strengthening them.

Mr. President,

6. Nigeria is one of the newcomer countries which has started the process of implementing a nuclear power programme, as part of its broad national strategy to diversify the generation base to ensure long-term energy self-sufficiency and security to meet the energy needs of her teeming population. This decision was arrived at after a long and meticulous process, using analytical and planning tools with the assistance of the IAEA. There is no doubt that the Fukushima Daiichi accident would most likely present additional hurdles to our national efforts at implementing the NPP programme.

7. However, we remain committed to our decision to embark on the programme, given that the factors that informed our choice have not changed inspite of the safety questions raised by the accident. We also believe that the solution does not lie in backing out since whatever risk inherent in owning and operating a nuclear plant plant is shared even by those who may not want a share of it. In our view, the focus should be on

how to own and operate these plants with understanding and very high sense of responsibility. This responsibility should be seen as a global one which nudge us on to share experience, information and best practices in a transparent and sustainable manner.

8. Nigeria fully appreciates the enormity of the responsibility to successfully implement a nuclear power programme safely in a sustainable manner. Consequently, it has recently upgraded the national focal nuclear agency, the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission to an independent operational status with full autonomy.

Mr. President,

9. A recent publication of the Agency indicated that more than sixty new State Parties are considering introducing nuclear power to generate electricity. The publication further predicted that twenty of these, including many developing countries were likely to bring their first nuclear power plants on-line within two decades. This was quite reassuring, then.

10. Now, with the current safety issues arising from the Fukushima Daiichi accident, a new set of important safety variables may have been introduced, and would have to be adequately addressed by the newcomer countries. It is therefore imperative that, the revised global nuclear safety framework, which would evolve from the recommendations of this conference and attendant follow-up actions by the IAEA, should take into consideration, the peculiar needs of the newcomer countries in the implementation of their NPP programmes.

11. One critical factor in developing and ensuring adherence to the culture of nuclear safety in the newcomer countries is the emplacement of an effective regulatory regime. This would entail the adoption and encoding, as well as the enforcement of internationally accepted safety standards by an independent national nuclear regulatory body. I wish to inform, Mr. President that Nigeria has also strengthened the national nuclear regulator by providing the relevant inputs to position it to adequately and safely regulate the new nuclear power programme.

12. It is therefore desirable that, as part of the new nuclear regulatory order that may evolve from the recommendations of this august conference and others after this, an international mechanism and global commitment to building and strengthening the regulatory infrastructure of the newcomer countries through reactor-vendor participation under the guidance of the IAEA should be considered crucial. This, ultimately, may require some further strengthening of the Agency's coordination role through an appropriate review.

Mr President

13. As we are aware, the issue of nuclear safety cannot be divorced from nuclear security. Thus, a more robust and strengthened global nuclear safety framework may also entail a tighter nuclear security regime. However, the international commitment to the enforcement of an effective nuclear safety and security regime should be achieved through effective national legislations and the enhancement of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation among Member States. It should be devoid of any discriminatory structures.

14. Mr President, in demonstrating its commitment to compliance with international legal and regulatory requirements for nuclear safety, security and safeguards, Nigeria has acceded to and ratified the relevant treaties and conventions preparatory to commencement of operations of nuclear power plants in the country. The coming into force of the Pelindaba Treaty on the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in July 2009 is an added impetus in this regard. The monitoring of compliance and enforcement of the Treaty would be achieved through the African Commission for Nuclear Energy (AFCONe).

15. Noting that the implementation of effective and robust nuclear safety regime is hinged on the availability of adequate and qualified manpower, Nigeria has continued to pay special attention to the training and development of the requisite human resource base in partnership with the IAEA through its Technical Cooperation programme.

Mr. President,

16. I would like to congratulate you for coordinating this conference and to say that your wealth of experience which has been brought to bear on its structure and conduct. We look forward to a fruitful deliberation, which outcome should assure the nuclear community of their safety while enjoying the benefits of nuclear technology. I thank you and wish all of us a successful Conference.