

# **NIGERIA AT 50: CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY**

PAPER PRESENTED BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA TO  
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OF NIGERIA'S 50<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY  
LECTURE GIVEN AT THE HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL, PRETORIA ON 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2010

The age of 50 is a milestone in the life of a nation. It is for that reason that we are gathered here today to celebrate 50 years of Nigeria's independence.

2. The objective of my presentation is to give you an insight into the dynamics of Nigeria's foreign policy, with emphasis on the Southern Africa sub-region, in the last 50 years. However, since this occasion is about 50 years of Nigeria's attainment of nationhood, I consider it appropriate to start my presentation with a quick glance at the major developments in the modern history of Nigeria.

## Nigeria at a Glance

3. Nigeria as a country came into being in January 1914 with the amalgamation of the Colony of Lagos (first annexed in 1861), the Southern Protectorates (established 1885 – 1894) and the Northern Protectorate (which was "pacified" by 1903). Hitherto, the British had administered them as separate but related territories. Local involvement in government was introduced in 1922 when southern politicians, from Lagos and Calabar, took seats in the central legislative assembly. Their northern counterparts did not have legislative experience until 1947 when a new constitution introduced the principle of regional representation. The 1954 constitution created fully-fledged regional governments, and federal elections were held in 1959 the year before independence.

4. Exactly 50 years ago today, Nigeria was granted independence on 1 October 1960, originally with Dominion status. In 1963, Nigeria broke its direct links with the

British Crown and became a Republic within the Commonwealth. The independence constitution provided for a federation of three autonomous regions - Northern, Western and Eastern - each with wide-ranging powers, its own constitution, public service, and marketing boards. The federal government, at the centre, had powers limited to national issues, including control of the police and army, and economic planning. The political system was derived from the Westminster model. A fourth region – the Mid-West – was created in 1964.

5. In the early 1960s, the inherited regional structure led to a series of crises and conflicts, both within and between the 3 ethno-centric regions. The 1964 federal elections were marred by violence. Inter-party and inter-ethnic tensions continued leading ultimately to a military takeover in January 1966. Thereafter Nigeria's post-independence history was marked by a series of military interventions in politics: coups, counter-coups, and a civil war from 1967-70.

6. In an attempt to break up the power of the regions, and forestall future conflict, the regional structure was dismantled in 1967, and replaced by 12 states. Additional states were later created in phases in response to demands – in 1976 the number rose to 19, in 1989 to 21, in 1991 to 30, and in 1996 to the present 36. A new Federal Capital Territory, at Abuja in the centre of the country, was created in 1976 but it was not fully operational until the mid-1990s.

7. Today, Nigeria occupies an area of about 923,768 sq. km, with a population of about 151 million (World Bank, 2009). The capital city, Abuja, is estimated to have a population of about 6 million. Nigeria is the world's eighth largest exporter of oil. She is the economic powerhouse of West Africa, contributing nearly 50% of regional GDP. It is also the second biggest economy in the continent after South Africa.

8. At present, political activities have been stepped up in the country in preparation for party primaries to determine their candidates to the general elections scheduled to

take place in April 2011. A smooth electoral process is expected and the President is expected to assume office in May 2011.

### Nigeria's Foreign Policy

9. Nigeria is a country with a mission, a manifest destiny to lead. She joined the United Nations as its 99<sup>th</sup> member, on 7 October 1960, just 6 days after independence. The urgency with which she joined the world body is a clear testimony of her determination to make an impact in global politics, especially in the struggle for the liberation of every inch of the African continent which was then under the yoke of colonialism and institutionalised racism in Southern Africa.

10. Nigeria's leadership role in Africa however, began to manifest even before the country's independence in 1960. As early as 1955, the then leader of the National Convention of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, advised Asian powers to "appreciate the historic mission and manifest destiny of Nigeria on the African continent." The warning was addressed to the organisers of the 1955 Conference of African, Asian and Latin American countries held in Bandung, Malaysia, in preparation for the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, because they failed to invite Nigeria.

11. The guiding principles of Nigeria's foreign policy have been constant since independence. Successive governments however did exercise some freedom of manoeuvre, laying more emphasis in certain areas than in others, during their tenures. That notwithstanding, all Nigerian governments since independence have upheld the centrality of Africa in the nation's foreign policy. The present afro-centric nature of the policy could be traced to the Murtala/Obasanjo administration, when it implemented the report of the Adedeji foreign policy review panel which it established in September 1975. The report of the panel continues to guide the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy in which Africa became the centre-piece.

12. In keeping with the afro-centric tradition, the 1999 Constitution captures Nigeria's foreign policy objectives as follows:

- i. Promotion and protection of the national interest;
- ii. Promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- iii. Promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its ramifications;
- iv. Respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
- v. Promotion of a just world economic order.

13. The administration of General Muhammad Buhari, who came to power on 31 December 1983, fine-tuned the afro-centric foreign policy by introducing the concept of concentric circles to determine the country's foreign policy priorities. At the epicentre of the circles are the national economic and security interests of Nigeria which are acknowledged as being inextricably tied to the security, stability and the economic and social wellbeing of its immediate neighbours and sub-region, followed by the rest of Africa.

14. In the pursuit of her foreign policy since independence, Nigeria has been an active member of many international organizations, including the United Nations and several of its special and related agencies; the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Organization of African Unity (OAU) - now African Union [AU]; the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU); the Commonwealth; and the Nonaligned Movement. In all these organisations, Nigeria has remained focused towards achieving the above mentioned objectives.

## Nigeria's Peace-keeping Efforts in Africa

15. Peace-keeping and peace-building have been a consistent part of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence. This has earned her an enviable profile in the comity of nations. Nigerian troops have participated in almost all United Nations regional and sub-regional peace-keeping and peace-building operations, committing cumulatively over 200,000 officers and men of it's armed forces and police and billions of dollars.

16. Nigeria's first outing on peace-keeping was to the Congo, as part of the 20,000 strong UN Operations in the Congo (ONUC), which commenced operation in July 1960, three months before Nigeria's independence. Although Nigeria was involved in ONUC for just three and a half years, she provided the third largest national force in the Congo, after India and Ethiopia. Nigeria also provided the force commander in the person of Late General Aguiyi Ironsi.

17. Nigeria has also participated in the following bilateral, regional and continental peace-support missions in Africa:

- i. Under bilateral arrangements, Nigerian troops were sent to Tanzania in 1964 to help maintain law and order, following a mutiny in the Tanganyika Army;
- ii. In 1979 soldiers of Nigeria's 21 Infantry Battalion and the 202 Recce Regiment were deployed to Chad as a peace-keeping force to monitor a ceasefire and inspire confidence in the on-going peace process;
- iii. Nigerian troops were again deployed to Chad in 1982 as part of the OAU peace-keeping efforts;
- iv. At the Thirteenth Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in Banjul, The Gambia, which took place from 28-30 May 1990, Nigeria proposed the formation of a Community

- v. Nigeria maintained her preponderance of force in Liberia even when the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was established through UN Resolution 866, to monitor and supervise the implementation of the Cotonou Peace Agreement signed on 25 July 1993;
- vi. Nigeria also contributed the largest contingent when ECOMOG was moved to Sierra Leone on a peace-keeping *cum* Peace-enforcement mission. ECOMOG recovered most of the country from the rebels and returned the ousted President Tejan Kabbah to office on 10 March 1998;
- vii. Under the mandate of the African Union Nigeria embarked on a peace-building mission in Sao Tome & Principe where she succeeded in persuading dissident soldiers to subject themselves to constituted authorities; and
- viii. Nigeria has also deployed in Rwanda and is still in the Darfur Region of Sudan, maintaining the peace. Where it has over 6,000 troops.
- ix. Nigeria also deployed in the following African countries: Angola (UNAVEM), Namibia (UNTAG), Mozambique (UNOMUZ), Western-Sahara (MINURSO), Somalia (UNOSOM) and the Aouzou strip (UNASOG)
- x. Though the scope of this presentation is limited to Africa, Nigeria is currently the fourth largest contributor globally, in UN peace-keeping operations.

18. Members of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) also participated in international peace-keeping operations, receiving accolades wherever they participated. In the Congo, NPF operated in a dual capacity, performing both civil and military roles.

#### Technical Aid Corps (TAC)

19. At independence, Nigeria embraced the policy of South–South cooperation based on historical linkages and the knowledge that developing countries were plagued by the common problems of poverty and under-development. Assistance to needy countries has since been a major component of Nigeria’s foreign policy. A Technical Assistance Programme for African countries and for the various liberation movements in Southern Africa was thus established in furtherance of the policy.

20. The policy was given more practical expression with the establishment of the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) in 1987. The objectives of the Corps are as follows:

- i. To share Nigeria’s know-how and expertise with other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries;
- ii. To give assistance on the basis of the assessed and perceived needs of the recipient countries;
- iii. To promote cooperation and understanding between Nigeria and the recipient countries; and
- iv. To facilitate meaningful contacts between the youth of Nigeria and those of the recipient countries.

21. The objectives reflect Nigeria’s desire to give assistance that will impact positively on the development efforts of recipient countries, with a view to fostering cooperation and understanding not only between the two countries but, more directly, between their youths.

22. Under the scheme, Nigerian professionals in the fields of medicine, engineering, agriculture, law, survey, accountancy, education etc are deployed to needy ACP countries upon request. The Nigerian government assumes responsibility for the monthly salaries and return air tickets of TAC volunteers, while the receiving countries provide free accommodation, free medical services and free transportation from the capital city to the place of deployment.

23. The scheme is currently operational in about 20ACP countries where the volunteers continue to impact positively on the development of the recipient countries. Since its inception, TAC has recorded remarkable achievements in several areas, including the following:

- i. Increase in the number of recipient countries to 20 in the 2004-2006 biennium;
- ii. Increase in the number of volunteers deployed to ACP countries to 500 in the 2004-2006 biennium; and
- iii. Increase in interest in the scheme among both Nigerians and ACP countries: in the 2004-2006 biennium, over 50,000 Nigerian professionals applied for recruitment while over 1000 requests were received from needy countries.

#### Nigeria and African Unity

24. The role played by Nigeria in shaping the orientation of the moderate Monrovia Group (as opposed to the radical Casablanca Group), which in turn largely influenced the orientation of the Organisation of African Unity when it was born on 25 May 1963 have been well documented. The contributions of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's government (1960-66), were crucial in translating the dream of African unity into practical reality. The Balewa administration hosted important preparatory meetings in Lagos at the end of which the principles outlined by the Nigerian delegation at the Pan-African Summit in Addis Ababa in 1963 were adopted and incorporated into the OAU Charter. It is therefore not an exaggeration to suggest that the OAU was conceived in Lagos and born in Addis Ababa.

25. Nigeria also played a central role in the conception and birth of the African Union, which replaced the OAU, in Durban, South Africa, on 9 July 2002.

26. More recently, speaking at the 15th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU on 26 July 2010 in Kampala, President Goodluck Jonathan, who was attending for the first time as President, reaffirmed that Nigeria would remain committed to pursuing and promoting the ideals of the African Union (AU).

### Nigeria and the New Partnership for Africa's Development

27. Nigeria was among the five initiating countries that spearheaded the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). She played an active role, along with the other initiating countries (South Africa, Algeria, Egypt and Senegal), who were given a mandate by the OAU to develop an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa. NEPAD was thus established with the formal adoption of the NEPAD Strategic Framework at the 37th Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July 2001, as a programme of the OAU.

28. NEPAD's primary objectives, which are in line with Nigeria's afro-centric foreign policy posture, are to eradicate poverty; to place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; to accelerate the empowerment of women.

29. Nigeria's pivotal role is evident from the commitment she has demonstrated in implementing the NEPAD agenda in the form of sectoral reforms at the domestic level; in providing leadership for the purpose of mobilising the rest of Africa at the continental level; and by collaborating and facilitating the engagement of the larger international community to partner Africa under the NEPAD arrangement.

### Africa Peer Review Mechanism

30. Since she acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in March 2003, Nigeria has affirmed and demonstrated her commitment to the NEPAD/APRM initiative by taking concrete policy actions and measures towards the implementation of the APR process in the country. They include the emplacement of the necessary operational management mechanism and processes for stakeholder and partner participation in the implementation of the APRM. The measures were assessed as excellent by the APRM Country Support Mission (CSM), which visited the country from March 21 – 24, 2005.

31. Generally, in all four thematic areas, Nigeria has made appreciable strides in the right direction since 1999. The success stories include the successful return of the country to Constitutional rule in 1999, conduct of the first post-transitional elections in 2003 without a major national crisis, continuing opening of the political space with the emergence of many political parties, rehabilitation of university infrastructure and licensing of many new universities, especially the privately-owned ones, which provide appropriate leadership training sites. Others include the burgeoning of civil society organizations working in diverse areas of democracy and political governance, ratification of a number of international treaties that have been outstanding for many years, the country's improved image as emerging market for investors and numerous reforms including those in the banking sector, civil service, and public accountability.

32. In its Nigeria Country Review Report of May 2001, the APR Panel commended the Government and the People of Nigeria for reaching this stage of the process. It noted that Nigeria was not only one of the five initiating countries of NEPAD but was also a key architect and one of the first countries to accede to the APRM. The Panel lauded the Government and People of Nigeria for staying the course, thereby enabling the country to finalise the self-assessment and review stage of the process.

#### Nigeria and West Africa

33. Again Nigeria was one of two initiators of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as it is known today. Although an agreement was signed between Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone earlier in February 1965 for the creation of a community for the West African sub region, the initiative did not materialise at that time.

34. In April 1972, General Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria and General Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo re-launched the idea of establishing a West African community canvassed by President William Tubman of Liberia in 1964. They drew up proposals and toured 12 countries, soliciting their plan from July to August 1973. A meeting was then called at Lomé from 10-15 December 1973, which studied a draft treaty. This was further examined at a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra in January 1974 and by a ministerial meeting in Monrovia in January 1975. Finally, 15 West African countries signed the treaty for an Economic Community of West African States (Treaty of Lagos) on 28 May 1975. The protocols launching ECOWAS were signed in Lomé, Togo, on 5 November 1976.

35. When ECOWAS was registered in Nigeria in May 1975, there were 15 members in the organization. In 1976, Cape Verde joined as the 16<sup>th</sup> member. When, in 2002, Mauritania left the organization, its membership reverted to the following 15 members: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

36. As you are aware, the main objective of forming ECOWAS was to achieve economic integration and shared development so as to form a unified economic zone in West Africa. Later on, the scope was increased to include socio- political interactions and mutual development in related spheres.

37. The central role that Nigeria plays in West Africa should also be seen within the context of her afro-centric foreign policy and its concentric circle variant. It is within this

context that Nigeria initiated, sponsored and led the multinational ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to restore peace in several West African civil wars, putting troops into Liberia (twice), Sierra Leone and later Cote d'Ivoire.

### Nigeria and Southern Africa

38. At independence, Nigeria's Southern Africa policy was directed towards the eradication of colonialism and racial discrimination, especially the apartheid system. Nigeria had come to realise, more clearly during her civil war, that the existence of the minority-dominated regimes in Southern Africa, in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, was a direct threat to her security.

39. The actions taken by the Federal Government to demonstrate its resolve to see the end of racial discrimination include:

- i. Following the imposition of sanctions against the then Rhodesia in the wake of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the minority regime of Ian Smith on 11 November 1965, the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa government made substantial donations to Rhodesia's neighbouring countries to help alleviate the hardship they might suffer as a result of the sanctions.
- ii. Under the post-civil war government of General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria increased her diplomatic support to nationalist movements and substantially increased her contribution to the OAU Liberation Fund;
- iii. Immediately General Murtala Muhammed came to power, liberation movements were allowed to open offices in Lagos. General Olusegun Obasanjo sustained the policy and introduced various manpower training programmes in Nigeria for people from Southern Africa.
- iv. In reaction to the involvement of the then apartheid South Africa in the Angolan crisis on the side of UNITA, the General Murtala Muhammed

- v. The Obasanjo Administration launched the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF), distinct from the OAU Liberation Fund, in December 1976. The Fund was for the provision of medical and other supplies to the liberation movements. The Fund never replaced the OAU Liberation Fund to which Nigeria continued to make contributions, which was increased in 1975. Nigeria also granted hundreds of scholarships to South African students in our tertiary institutions.
- vi. After the independence of Zimbabwe, Nigeria stepped up her support to SWAPO of Namibia. Nigerian military transport planes delivered arms, relief materials, drugs and food to SWAPO on a regular basis through Rwanda.
- vii. By 1981, Nigeria had donated over \$1.01 billion to the OAU Special Fund for the independence of Namibia.

### Nigeria and South Africa

40. Relations between Nigeria and South Africa date back to immediate pre-independence days when the international community was up in arms against colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid. The Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, seven months before Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960, gave Nigeria and the freedom-loving nations of the world the ammunition to focus attention on South Africa, leading to the adoption, on 14 December 1960, of the landmark United Nations resolution on "The Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples."

41. Following the Sharpeville massacre, there was overwhelming pressure from members of Nigeria's Federal House of Representatives, from the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and the Western and Northern Houses of

Assembly, calling for a ban on the importation of South African goods and the expulsion of the country from the Commonwealth.

42. Other radical actions taken by Nigeria to accelerate the demise of apartheid include the following.

- i. As a result of OAU's decision to isolate the apartheid regime in South Africa, Nigeria spearheaded the opposition to dialogue with South Africa in 1971. Nigeria took the lead in ensuring that the issue of dialogue with the apartheid regime proposed by some OAU member countries was debated and defeated;
- ii. In recognition of Nigeria's firm commitment to this policy, she was elected Chair of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid which position she held for about 30 years.
- iii. As part of the policy, Nigeria not only opposed the so-called independence of Transkei from South Africa which was announced in October 1976, she proceeded to introduce a resolution which was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly (with only one country abstaining) declaring Transkei independence invalid.
- iv. Nigeria led African protest against the sale of 7 wasp helicopters to South Africa in 1971 and Nigeria withdrew from the Commonwealth's Eight Nation Committee on the security of the Indian Ocean after describing the sale as disregard for African opinion.
- v. Nigeria mounted her own campaign publicising the evils of apartheid; externally through the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and internally through the National Action Committee Against Apartheid (NACAP), which continually informed the Nigerian public about the evils of apartheid.
- vi. The Obasanjo administration hosted two international conferences on apartheid: the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid in Lagos in

- vii. At the opening of the 1984 conference, General Obasanjo informed the participants that foreign contractors known to have links with South Africa were barred from taking part in any tenders or any transactions or construction work in Nigeria.

### **Economic Diplomacy**

#### **Oil at Concessionary Price**

43. The Federal Government's decision to sell oil to interested African countries at concessionary price was in line with the country's economic diplomacy. The decision was in response to the quadrupling of oil prices between October 1973 and January 1974 and the realisation that most black African countries would not be able to foot their energy bills. OAU/ECA estimated that in 1974, black African countries would spend about \$950 million on the importation of crude oil as against \$350 million in the preceding year.

#### **Bilateral Economic Agreements**

44. Although trade between Nigeria and other African countries remains largely at informal levels, at inter-governmental level, there is no shortage of economic agreements with the countries in East, Central and Southern Africa, including Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles, and South Africa.

#### **South Africa**

The platform on which Nigeria and South Africa conducts bilateral socio-political economic relations is the Nigeria-South Africa Bilateral Commission.

45. It is gratifying to note that the Trade, Industry and Finance Working Group of the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-national Commission (BNC) has gone a long way towards concluding agreements on the legal framework necessary for the smooth operation of economic relations between the two countries. An Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation has already been signed and gazetted by the two governments. Outstanding agreements at various stages of conclusion include:

- i. Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Cooperation which has reached its final stage of preparation and is ready for signing;
- ii. Memorandum of Understanding on Consumer Protection;
- iii. Agreement on Cooperation on Standards, which is ready for signature;
- iv. MoU on Cooperation on Customs Matters, which is being considered by the two parties;
- v. Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement; and
- vi. Capital Market Development Agreement between the Financial Services Board of South Africa and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Nigeria, which is under consideration.

#### Joint Presidential Advisory Council on Investment (JPACI)

46. In their quest to harmonise and accelerate investment between Nigeria and South Africa, the two countries have established a Joint Presidential Advisory Council on Investment to act as an advisory body to the two Presidents on business cooperation and investment promotion. The body was inaugurated in Abuja on 24 February 2009-

#### South Africa – Nigeria Chamber of Commerce

47. The South Africa-Nigeria Chamber of Commerce (SA-NCC) was launched in May as a non-profit organization created for the promotion and facilitation of Nigeria-related business. About 50 leading South African companies and Nigerian companies doing business in Nigeria are members of the Chamber.

48. The chamber has regular breakfast meetings at which topics that may be of interest to business men and women, such as customs regulations, challenges of doing business, new opportunities, sector information and the South Africa-Nigeria relationship, are discussed. Speakers include officials and specialists from institutions and organisations doing business in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

49. At the age of 50, Nigeria has certainly achieved a lot, especially for the betterment of the lot of fellow Africans. Political emancipation of the continent has been largely achieved. What remains now is to achieve the economic emancipation of the continent. It is a herculean task, though not unachievable. Together with South Africa and other endowed African countries, the task can be accomplished in the not too distant future.

50. Thank you.