STATEMENT
BY
AMBASSADOR OLUFEMI GEORGE
SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON NUCLEAR SAFETY AND SECURITY
NEW YORK, THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2011.
Mr Chairman,

Let me restate the best wishes of His Excellency, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, made to the Secretary-General yesterday and to further assure him of Nigeria’s unyielding commitment to the ethos and noble ideals of the United Nations.

2. I wish to also commend his initiative for convening this High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security, which is in sync with his admirable five-point proposal on nuclear disarmament in 2008. I will, at this juncture, align myself with the Statement read by the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and welcome our readiness to discuss the issues of safety and security with respect to nuclear technology.

3. The right to use nuclear energy, including nuclear power generation is a sovereign right of States; and in this context, Nigeria supports the increasing application of nuclear technology, strictly for peaceful purposes. We have observed that the application of technologies without noble intentions, as in all spheres of human endeavour, could be susceptible to gross and fundamental abuse or misuse.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Our gathering at this meeting should signpost a renewed emphasis that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) remains the sole inter-governmental organisation, within the UN system, with the mandate and experience to deal with the technical issues of nuclear safety and nuclear security. We need to re-affirm this principle in order to protect our citizens from potential risks. In the circumstance, the various initiatives employed in response to the recent Fukushima Nuclear Accident are pointers to the fact that such efforts are essential to reinforce and complement the on-going work of the IAEA.

5. Nigeria notes the invaluable insights contained in the recently released Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations system-wide study on the implications of the accident at the Fukushima Nuclear
Power Plant. The Report, among other things, addresses primary issues such as the IAEA safeguards, Peaceful Nuclear Energy applications, Agriculture and Food Security, the Environment, Health, Sustainable Development and Financing. We also note, in particular, the second section which focuses on nuclear safety and security. This appears to be well in line with keeping to the tenets of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (1979), Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (1986), the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (1986) as well as the Convention on Nuclear Safety (1994).

7. My delegation affirms that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety and nuclear security rests with individual States, but we are also mindful of the nature of nuclear safety and nuclear security, liberally provided within the IAEA architecture and safeguards. It is for this reason, coupled with adherence to Article III of the Statute of the IAEA, that Nigeria considers the invaluable work of the Agency on nuclear safety standards as central to its nuclear energy programme.

8. Nigeria believes, however, that nuclear safety and nuclear security considerations should not be used to hamper the utilization of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in developing countries, and welcomes the continued efforts of the IAEA in the areas of assistance to Member-States through the Nuclear Security Fund.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Nigeria supports the Convention on Nuclear Safety, as an effective effort to promote the culture of protection and encourages full adherence by State Parties to its provisions. We are convinced that multilateral norms, guidelines and rules in nuclear security are better pursued within the framework of IAEA, as an inclusive and transparent process.

10. As a country seized with multiple development challenges, including those associated with energy generation and consumption, food security and sustainable development, Nigeria welcomes and supports nuclear energy as a clean and viable source of power. Moreover, being
the most populous country in Africa with a successful implementation of a nuclear power programme, will no doubt provide a multiplier-effect on various sectors of our economy and positively reflect on those of our neighbours.

Mr. Chairman,

11. My country maintains a healthy collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with a view to harnessing the benefits of nuclear power programme to generate energy and improve the economy. Nigeria's decision to acquire and apply nuclear energy in these targeted sectors of our economy, therefore, is solely for the purposes of socio-economic development.

12. Notwithstanding the known fact that the application of nuclear energy will boost electricity generation and related scientific developments, we cannot overstate, in the post-Chernobyl and Fukushima experiences, the need to strengthen global nuclear safety framework, as a necessary ingredient to ensuring and/or limiting future nuclear accidents, in view of the pain and toll on affected peoples across the globe.

Mr. Chairman,

13. Nuclear energy might be one of the safest and cleanest sources of electricity generation, but available data has shown about 23 nuclear accidents since the realization of its industrial and economic benefits. While some may consider the number of these accidents as relatively normal, judging from about 450 commercial nuclear reactors operating in 30 countries; in retrospect, the world could have just "dodged a bullet", considering that the impact of these accidents, including the most recent at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant. This last accident has also highlighted the importance of enhanced hazard assessments on credible scenarios involving natural disasters on Nuclear Power Plants.

14. Moreover, in view of the increasing awareness that, accidents at nuclear installations have the potential for transboundary impacts, there is the need for us to combine efforts and facilitate access to the best
nuclear safety technology and expertise available globally, through the time-honoured and assured best-practices of the IAEA.

15. It has again been reiterated in the Secretary-General's Report, that the international community should promote universal adherence to and implementation of relevant international legal instruments, if we must address nuclear safety and security.

16. Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by commending, yet again, the Secretary-General for his efforts and commitments to make our world a safer place through a sound regime of nuclear safety and security, devoid of unfettered access to and abuse of nuclear technology.

17. I thank you.