

Opening statement by Geoffrey Onyeama

(Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Your Excellencies, colleagues, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Germany, Cameroon, Chad and Niger;

Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of Donor Countries;

Representatives of International Organisations;

Members of the Civil Society;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, I would like to express the appreciation of the Government and people of Nigeria to Norway and Germany for their magnanimity in co-hosting this Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad region at this pivotal time. I would also like to pay special tribute to the United Nations and the international community for the support rendered to Nigeria's fight against the Boko Haram insurgency and in addressing the attendant humanitarian and development crisis that has surfaced over the years. I must say that your support is critical to our efforts in undertaking practical steps to address these problems.

2. This Conference is taking place against the backdrop of complex humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad region and at a time Nigeria is experiencing fiscal constraints as the economy has plunged into a recession in the midst of costly military operation against Boko Haram. Our unswerving commitment to respond to the challenges remains steadfast within the constraints of available resources. This Conference, therefore, offers Nigeria a window of opportunity to draw attention to the ongoing efforts of the Government of Nigeria and our partners, to address the unfolding problems in this region and to strengthen our engagement and

collaboration with you in addressing the humanitarian and developmental challenges.

3. As a response to the insecurity in the Lake Chad region, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), was created under the auspices of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and comprises forces from all the four conflict-hit Lake Chad Basin countries- Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The Nigerian military, with the support of the MNJTF and the commitment of the Federal Government, has reclaimed much territory hitherto occupied by the terrorists. However, the successes recorded by the Nigerian military unmasked additional existing humanitarian needs which has attained grave proportions. We are mindful of the challenges as well as opportunities that abound. We are also mindful of the need for intensified rapid response and cooperation to achieve our objectives in this region. That was why, together with our partners, Germany, Norway and the United Nations, we felt it was important to increase awareness and generate support for these needs and, therefore, appeal for assistance.

4. Today, Nigeria and countries contiguous to the Lake Chad are experiencing one of the largest and gravest humanitarian crisis in the world. In Nigeria alone, 26 million people have been affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has identified 10.7 million people in need of life-saving assistance in the most severely affected areas in the Lake Chad region. In addition to the urgent need for provision of lifesaving assistance, we must also address the root causes of the crisis including poverty, underdevelopment and high population pressure.

5. Across the Lake Chad Region, over 7 million people are struggling with **food insecurity at emergency levels**, especially in the worst affected areas in North East Nigeria- Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States, and the majority of those in need are children only a fraction of these are IDPs. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), in collaboration with

the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), developed a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), as a methodology for collection and dissemination of data on IDPs. The DTM of January 2017 revealed that, the number of IDPs now stands at 1.8 million in North East Nigeria. **Vital infrastructure, including schools and health facilities, have been destroyed.** More than 87 % of the IDPs who have fled their homes due to the conflict in Borno State, the area that is most affected in Nigeria, are living in host communities that are among the world's poorest. Nevertheless, the people of these communities generously opened their homes to these IDPs. Maiduguri alone hosts more displaced people than the whole of Europe.

6. The foregoing presents a bleak picture and is indeed, a heavy burden for us to bear alone with the unprecedented displacement of people, disruption of social structures and destruction of physical infrastructure and assets. That is why after the measures we have adopted thus far, and a projection of what we intend to accomplish, we trust the **international community to lend a helping hand in providing assistance to our cause.** Now is the time to act decisively to expand humanitarian assistance and protection, as well as basic services, and thus lay the groundwork for early recovery and reconstruction, to prevent this from becoming a perpetual crisis.

7. On our part in Nigeria, the Government is more than ever, committed to tackling the humanitarian crisis and insecurity in the North East of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region as a matter of urgency. Concerned as we are about the growing crisis, Nigeria constituted an **Inter-Ministerial Task Force (IMTF)** and Humanitarian Coordination working group which co-developed Nigeria's **Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)** outlining the needs of those affected by the crisis. The HRP was developed with extensive consultations between the highest levels of government, the donor community, UN humanitarian organizations as well as international and local NGOs. It is one of the frameworks currently being

utilized by the government in collaboration with other partners to build a nexus between immediate and short term humanitarian response as well as longer term development activities. In 2016, the Federal Government and the six North Eastern Governments committed budgetary resources worth \$2.77 billion to the humanitarian needs, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the North East to various services from Education, Health, Nutrition, Security, reconstruction of critical basic infrastructure.

8. Equally noteworthy is the establishment of the **Presidential Committee for the North East Initiative (PCNI)**, a successor of the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE), established in 2009 as the primary national strategy, coordination and advisory body of all interventions, in the North-East region of Nigeria. With the successes recorded in the fight against Boko Haram, the focus is gradually shifting towards Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Recovery. The PCNI adopted a three-phase plan tagged the “Buhari Plan”. In the long term, the focus will be on economic development strategies that will provide sustainable growth for millions of citizens over a period of 60 months. This is a cost intensive endeavour.

9. In addition, the Federal Government, in 2014, constituted the **Victim Support Fund Committee (VSFC)**. The VSFC programmes are targeted mainly at schools, vulnerable groups of women and children as well as agriculture.

10. The Federal Government has also presented an executive bill to the National Assembly on the establishment of the North East Development Commission (NEDC). The Commission, when established, is expected to pool together resources from the government and other sources for a sustainable reconstruction, rehabilitation and recovery of the region. The NEDC would be long-term, a more permanent body, and would likely subsume the PCNI.

11. **Inter-agency cooperation**, through collaboration and information sharing has also contributed to the enhancement of our efforts. Through

joint efforts with our partners, government actors have **received capacity building on project implementation and monitoring as well as financial and resource support**. These have assisted, in no small measure, to the empowerment of the most vulnerable victims – women and children; and strengthened their roles as key stakeholders in the rebuilding of the North East, through economic empowerment, child protection, psychosocial support, health and education. Indeed, 81% of the total amount budgeted for the North East in 2016 was dedicated to programme implementation.

Your Excellencies,

12. As we commence implementation of the 2017 programme, we intend to focus on areas with relative peace and security, in order to set the pace for the voluntary and dignified return of IDPs and domesticate the Kampala Convention. The strategic goals of this presidential intervention include the provision of immediate relief to people in the North East, support the re-establishment of livelihoods, rehabilitate and resettle IDPs, facilitate peace building, provide security and drive infrastructure development. Other goals include to, revamp agriculture, generate jobs from environmental challenges thereby improving the environment, resuscitate healthcare, improve education and provide a platform for regional cooperation as well as good governance, leverage the geographical location of the region to generate wealth through commerce via international markets and border security. Finally, to commence the organic development of the region's solid minerals potentials for the collective benefits of the North East in particular and the nation in general.

13. From the financial perspective, efforts have thus far, relied on support and donations from the government, private sector, donor agencies, and individuals, though this is both unsustainable and insufficient. If nothing is done promptly to salvage the situation, the already dire situation might degenerate, possibly instigating massive

migration out of the region. I, therefore, appeal to our friends to join us, as we strive to ensure that our internally displaced citizens are given the opportunity to return to their erstwhile livelihoods and regain the peaceful and dignified existence they once knew and cherished.

14. It is my hope that the outcome of this Conference at this historic venue will mark that turning point in our history that we can look back at and say that this is where and when we met, took the right decision and agreed on the right actions that shaped a better future for victims of violent extremism

15. In total, \$1.054 billion would be needed to fund the international elements of 2017 HRP. So far, less than 1% of the Plan has been funded. The Federal Government of Nigeria has already as a minimum allocated \$632,309,339.54 in the budget and six States have also made budgetary allocation and we as a Nation then say that we have mobilized a total allocation of domestic resources in excess of \$1 billion

16. I would like to end my remarks by, once again, thanking you all for being a part of this Conference, for your enduring faith in Nigeria and your demonstrable readiness to partner with us as we committedly work to engender a strong, secure and prosperous region in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region.

I thank you for your attention.