



STATEMENT

BY

THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

AT THE

OPENING OF THE 98TH SESSION OF THE IOM COUNCIL

GENEVA, 23 NOVEMBER 2009

Mr. President,

Distinguished Director General,

Excellencies and Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you Mr. Chairperson on your election as Chair of this 98th Session of the IOM Council. Knowing your academic and diplomatic pedigree, I have no doubt that you will guide the proceedings of this Council very wisely. I also congratulate Members of your Bureau, including your first Vice President, Ambassador Idriss Jazairy of Algeria, the second Vice President, Ambassador Christian Strohal of Austria and Madam Adriana Mendoza of Colombia.

2. In the same vein, since this is the first time that Ambassador Laura Thompson would be attending this Council in her new capacity as Deputy Director General of our esteemed organisation, it is also fitting and proper to congratulate her and extend to her Nigeria's best wishes in the discharge of her functions. Equally, Nigeria appreciates the outstanding leadership role that Ambassador William Swing continues to give to the IOM, the wisdom, knowledge and diplomatic skills that have guided the conduct of the affairs in IOM since his election to the Office of Director General last year.

3. Finally, it would be remiss not to thank the immediate past Chairperson of the Council, the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, His Excellency Ambassador Mundarain Hernandez for the wise leadership he provided to the IOM during his tenure.

Mr. President,

4. This 98th Session of the Council is taking place at a critical time in world affairs, when international migration have become one of the most

topical issues of our time. The urgency of the situation is compounded by a number of other factors including the world food crisis, the economic and financial crisis and the worsening consequences of climate change. The particular tragedy in all of these is that, although these developments have great consequences for all of mankind, the worst efforts and ramifications are borne by countries of the geo-political South – countries of the African continent, those which are least equipped, financially and materially, to deal with them.

5. Against this backdrop, Nigeria fully associates itself with the Statement delivered by the distinguished Representative of Sudan on behalf of the African Group. Convinced that migration and development are two sides of the same coin and that national development and migratory flows are inter-linked, Nigeria believes that it is imperative that the international community must develop a sustainable framework for constructive dialogue and genuine partnership. In this context, IOM offers a unique platform deserving of our collective support and encouragement.

Chairperson,

6. It is common knowledge that many developing countries maintain that freer migration translates to quick means of increasing their benefits from globalisation. There is indeed a strong case that can be made for this argument, especially given the fact that the phenomenon of globalisation has also been instrumental in accentuating today's unprecedented level of migration. The challenge here is to develop and calibrate policies that would be acceptable to both industrial and developing nations which could, in turn, pave the way of global economic growth. Nigeria strongly believes that successful cooperation to spur Africa's economy and target migration issues, must include robustly providing adequate financing for continental development strategy (New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD), increasing financial aid to needy countries and proposing lasting solution to Africa's debt burden.

Chairperson,

7. Nigeria is gratified with the excellent work that the IOM has done in managing migration and articulating a vision and mission that generally takes into account the core interests of migrants and satisfies the aspirations of Member States. In this connection, we applaud the IOM strategy-document as it covers such issues as the human rights of migrants and their dependants, assistance in the area of labour migration, mitigating the brain drain from developing countries and combating migrant trafficking, in particular, women and children.

8. The Nigerian delegation is of the view that policies which encourage exploitation, mass expulsion, persecution of migrants and also denial of access to regular migration and justice in destination countries, do not only undermine the norms enshrined in the various international instruments on the subject, but also our commitment to promote and protect human rights of all persons. We note in particular that, without correct migration policies, the benefits of international migration may never be realised in many countries.

9. Nigeria views that protection of the human rights of migrants is an essential component of a comprehensive migration management system. To this end, in the process of developing a national policy as well as institutional framework for migration management in the country, our commitments under the various international and national instruments including the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, have informed the elaboration of the rights of migrants. In mainstreaming our international obligations and national values into migration policy instruments and processes in the country, our vision is to further enhance the protection of the rights of all migrants. Consequently, all non-Nigerians resident in, or in transit through the geographical space of Nigeria, have their rights protected.

Chairperson,

10. The Nigerian Government remains committed towards upholding the rights and privileges of migrants. It is in this connection, that Nigeria has ratified the International Convention of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and member of their families and other relevant instruments. We remain supportive of international collaboration and cooperation to facilitate the movement of migrants regardless of their immigration status.

11. Finally, Nigeria calls on the IOM Council to ensure that the issue of the safe migratory flows protection of the human rights of all migrants, continues to engage its attention and also mainstreamed into its processes. We further call on States and international organisations to explore the utility of labour migration agreements in addressing the problem of irregular migration.

12. I thank you.