

Impact of HIV/ AIDS on International Peace and Security

7 June 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Goodluck Jonathan, President of Nigeria

I would like to express Nigeria's appreciation to you personally, Mr. President, and to the Government of Gabon for this valuable and timely initiative. The theme for today's debate is well conceived and should afford the Security Council the opportunity to examine, within its mandate, the inextricable linkage between international peace, security and development. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his insightful briefing and commitment to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Let me also thank Mr. Michel Sidibé for his comprehensive statement that we have just heard.

Our deliberation here today is a declaration of solidarity with the high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS that will begin here in New York tomorrow. It is also a demonstration of the Security Council's commitment to an issue that is pivotal to the development and security of Africa in particular and of the world since the adoption of resolution 1308 (2000) by the Council in the year 2000.

As the largest contributor to peacekeeping in Africa and the fourth largest in the world, Nigeria has a major stake not only in ensuring that our armed forces are protected against HIV and AIDS but that they are also given adequate treatment. We remain fully committed to ensuring that HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care are integrated into the health services of the country's armed forces.

In our subregion we have taken stringent steps towards that objective. For example, the Economic Community of West African States subregional Transport Corridor project — which encompasses Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire — is designed to halt and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS among various populations, including military and paramilitary. We are committed to sustaining the momentum and indeed ensuring that we increase our level of engagement with the security services in these countries to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS in the region.

We note with concern the consequences of gender-based violence related to HIV and AIDS, especially in conflict situations, as expounded by the Secretary-General and Mr. Sidibé. Nigeria joins the international community in ensuring that women and girls in conflict situations are adequately protected. A significant challenge, however, is the absence of formal modes of operations in the many unconventional military compositions, such as militias. That makes it difficult to mainstream HIV programmes into those operations and to evaluate progress. For that reason, among others, we welcome the inclusion of an awareness programme in the mandates of all United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Thirty years since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic, the time is ripe for a final solution. I reiterate Nigeria's unequivocal support for a global response to this scourge. As the Secretary-General recognized in his statement, the prevention imperative is upon us. The human, social and economic costs of inaction are too great to contemplate. As a consequence, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to set clear, decisive goals so that our efforts to maintain peace can add to the armoury of weapons against HIV/AIDS. I pledge my nation's full support in this endeavour.