



**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

**BY  
LEADER OF NIGERIAN DELEGATION**

**H.E OBONG RITA AKPAN (MRS)  
HONOURABLE MINISTER  
[FEDERAL MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS]**

**AT THE FORMAL PRESENTATION OF NIGERIA'S  
COMBINED FIRST AND SECOND COUNTRY PERIODIC  
REPORTS ON THE CONVENTION OF  
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)**

**TO  
THE UN CRC COMMITTEE  
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE,  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

**26TH JANUARY, 2005.**

**Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished members of the Committee,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to first and foremost convey to you the felicitations of the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and, also express appreciation for the cooperation your Committee has warmly extended to Nigeria, towards the effective implementation of the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government of Nigeria is committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights, and particularly, the rights of the Child. We consider that the treaty body on the Convention, that is, your Committee, is performing a valuable and catalytic role in the protection of the rights of the Child.

However, Mr. Chairman before I proceed, permit me to introduce the rest of the Nigerian delegation:-

- HE Mr. Joseph U. Ayalogu  
Ambassador/Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission, Geneva
- Hon. Saudatu Sani  
Chairman, House Committee on Women Affairs
- Ms Chinyere Nawneri  
• Speaker, Children's Parliament
- Ms O. A. Imavan  
Director, Child Development/  
Ag. Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Madiu Haruna  
Deputy Director, Child Development

- Mr. Mike Omotosho  
Minister  
Permanent Mission, Geneva
- Mr. Tony Asikpo  
Special Assistant to the Honourable Minister
- Professor A. Adeyemi  
Professor of Law  
UNICEF  
CRC Chair  
Member National Chairman Child Rights  
Implementation Committee
- Dr. M. T. Ladan  
Head of Public Law,  
Faculty of Law  
Ahmadu Bello University  
Zaria
- Ms Carol Ndaguba  
Executive Secretary, NAPTIP
- Ms Sharon O. Oladiji  
Consultant/Legal Practitioner
- Ms Victoria O. Faluyi  
Education
- Dr. Nike Adeyemi  
Director  
Ministry of Health

- Ms Ngozi Jipreze  
Legal Adviser  
Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
- Ms. F. V. Aiyedun  
Desk Officer (CRC)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Indeed, Nigeria fully supports the enlargement of the Committee on the rights of the Child, from ten [10] to eighteen [18], as this increase not only strengthens the influence of the Committee but also makes the monitoring of the implementation more effective. As we express confidence in the work of this body, let me also assure the distinguished members of the Committee of the cooperation of my delegation throughout the process of this interaction.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

On behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I hereby have the honour to present the combined First and Second Periodic Country Reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

As you are aware, Nigeria's Initial Report was successfully defended in 1996. However, effort was made, unsuccessfully though, to retrieve the First Periodic Report submitted in 2002 because of formatting errors. Hence the combined nature of the current Report.

We have taken note of the Committee's Concluding Observations and Recommendations adopted on 11 October 1996, on Nigeria's Initial Report. We are also grateful for the comments of the Committee on the report submitted in 2002. The sixty-one

issues raised on the latter have been addressed and are presented along side the combined first and second periodic Reports for the Committee's consideration.

Since 1996, efforts have continued to be made, to address the concerns expressed by the Committee on the following critical areas:

- *the persistence of certain harmful practices and customs that have had a negative impact on the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed under the Convention;*
- *the apparent absence of pro-active measures to combat discrimination against disabled children, children belonging to ethnic minorities and those born out of wedlock;*
- *violence against children and the physical abuse of children in the family, in schools, in the community and in the society;*
- *legislation with regard to the administration of juvenile justice and institutionalization of children which does not appear to conform to the Principle and Provisions of the Convention; and*
- *low age of criminal responsibility for children in Nigeria.*

In the same vein, we wish to express appreciation for the Committee's useful recommendations in the effective implementation of the Convention, particularly as it relates to the following:

- *measures to ensure the physical and psychological recovery and rehabilitation of child victims of abuse, neglect, ill-treatment, violence or exploitation, in accordance with article 39 of the Convention.*

- *review of all legislations, customs, practices and policies that are discriminatory against children, in order to ensure their compatibility with the survival, development, protection and participation rights guaranteed to them under the Convention.*
- *Efforts to ensure that the guiding principles of the Convention, in particular, the best interest of the child and the participation of children, not only guide policy discussions, formulations and decision making, but also are integrated in the development and implementation of all projects and programmes; and*
- *Considerable efforts toward ensuring that all adults and children are aware of the rights of the child as contained in the Convention.*

In addressing the above concerns and recommendations, the current Report has taken cognizance of the complexity of Nigeria, draws attention to the slow but steady progress in the generation of national statistics and the differing levels of economic development between the various zones of the country. It observes the constraints in the implementation of the Convention and positive changes that are taking place at various levels within the different zones; the impact of the CRC on different target groups, institutions and systems; and the challenges posed by the federal structure of the nation with three levels of Government, namely, Federal, State and Local.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Notwithstanding this complexity, it is my pleasure to inform the Committee that some concrete steps have been taken by Nigeria towards the progressive realization of the Convention.

## 1. Measures to implement the CRC:

Since the submission of the Initial Country Report, concerted efforts had been made at the Federal, State and Local Government levels in Nigeria to translate the provisions of the Convention into reality, and to ensure effective and practical implementation.

These interventions and measures are in the areas of the provision of legal and institutional framework, popularization of CRC, law enforcement, survival and participation of children.

### (1) *Legal Framework*

The following Federal and State legislations address issues of child protection and the prohibition of practices inimical to the welfare of the child:

- Child Rights Act, 2003.
- Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003.
- Ebonyi State Law 010 (2001) on the Abolition of Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children
- Edo State Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Prohibition Law, 2000.
- Edo State Criminal Code (Amendment) Law, 2000.
- Bauchi State Hawking by Children (Prohibition) Edict 1985 Cap 58.
- Cross River State Girl-Child Marriages and female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law, 2000. etc.

Generally, these efforts are indicative of commitments by Nigeria in a dynamic process to address the question of harmonization of national, state and local laws with the Convention.

(ii) *Institutional Arrangements*

At institutional level, the following mechanisms have been put in place to promote Child's rights issues:

- establishment of the Child Development Department in the National Commission for Women (1993), now Federal Ministry of Women Affairs as well as their State and Local Government counterparts;
- creation of National Child's Rights Implementation Committee (NCRIC), 1994;
- formation of State and Local Government Child's Rights Implementation Committees (SCRICs and LCRICs) 1996;
- establishment of the Child's Rights Information Bureau (CRIB) in the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, in 1995, and its counterparts in the States to facilitate the dissemination of information and issues that concern women and children's rights;
- transfer of the Social Services Division charged with supervision of fostering and adoption procedures in Nigeria to the Child Development Department of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development (2002);
- establishment of the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), 2003;
- emergence and registration of numerous NGOs in the area of child protection and child care;
- the formation of the National Council of Child's Rights Advocates of Nigeria (NACCRAN) as the umbrella NGO for non-governmental groups involved in child's rights advocacy;



- appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Child's Rights in Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission.

(iii) *Popularisation*

Recognising the imperative to accord widest dissemination and publicity to the CRC in Nigeria during the period covered by this Report, several actions/activities have taken place, including:

- translation of the CRC into local languages in several zones of the country;
- circulation of simplified and abridged versions of the Convention in the country. These have also been translated into the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) as well as some other local languages;
- advocacy and sensitization visits to stakeholders and opinion leaders at various levels;
- seminars, workshops and conferences for target groups as appropriate;
- holidays camps for children, quiz and debate competitions, children's rallies and commemoration of special days like the Day of the African Child (16th June) and the National Children's Day (27th May);
- media campaigns, radio and television enlightenment programmes, including documentaries and movies;
- establishment of Child's Rights Clubs and child-friendly schools; and
- production of information education and communication (IEC) materials, like posters, billboards and newspaper advertisements.

#### (iv) *Law Enforcement*

Enforcement of the provisions of the CRC, backed by national laws and regulations took the following forms:

- the setting up of Juvenile, Children and Women's desks at Police posts across Nigeria in 2002, with an officer of the rank of a Police Commissioner, co-coordinating the activities nation wide;
- interception, rescue, repatriation and rehabilitation of trafficked children, children in exploitative labour and abusive situations as well as the prosecution of adult culprits by both Federal and State Governments. In this direction, about 60 children were repatriated to Benin Republic from Nigeria between September and October 2003, and this is on going. Traffickers are prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law;
- programme to withdraw street children, and to rehabilitate them in craft centres for retraining and re-orientation by Government Agencies and NGOs. Others are also reunited with their families where possible; and
- *Hisbah* Committees (Islamic Law Enforcement Agents) help to monitor compliance with the law, since many of the provisions of the CRC and CRA are similar to those under the Shari'a Laws.

#### (v) *Participation*

Opportunities for the participation of children in matters that concern their rights and welfare have progressively increased over the years since Nigeria's initial country Report. Such opportunities include:

- the formation of Child's Rights Clubs in primary and post primary schools across the country;

- the inauguration of the Children's Summit in 2000 and which has now evolved into Children's Parliaments at National and State levels;
- the opportunity provided for Nigerian children to participate in the African Day of Broadcasting, and in the production and presentation of programmes dealing with issues that concern children; and
- the One-day Governor Programme in Lagos State, whereby the Governor and his cabinet vacate their offices for one day in a year, for children who are selected through a spelling competition organized by the Governor's wife, to act as governor etc for 1 day.

(vi) *Survival of Children*

Survival Rights of the Child are fulfilled through:

- formation of Social Mobilization Committees, at national, state and local levels, on immunization of children against poliomyelitis and other killer childhood diseases;
- regular de-worming exercises for children in primary schools across the country;
- free pre- and post-natal medical care for women and children up to the age of five years;
- Iodine and Vitamin A supplementation exercise,;
- Roll-back Malaria project, including the popularization of the use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets;
- various intervention measures by state and local governments where children are involved; and
- promotion of exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months of life.

## **2. Measures to train professional groups on the provisions of the Convention**

There is an-ongoing campaign to sensitize and train the professional groups and bodies whose duties have some bearing on the protection of children's rights on the provision of provisions of the CRC and the *Child's Rights Act 2003*. These include social workers, police officers, judicial officers, information officers, civil society groups and NGOs, health workers, teachers and communities. The Government's effort is complemented by NGOs and other stakeholders like UNICEF, ILO, WHO and UNDP, who conduct workshops, seminars and formal training programmes for child's rights professionals. Many of these professionals are now aware, than ever, of their responsibilities as regard the protection of children's rights. Training manuals have also been developed by the National Human Rights Commission in collaboration with UNICEF and NGOs, in this regard since 2003.

## **3. Collaboration between Groups and Individuals in the Implementation of the Convention.**

Efforts have been made, especially in the last five years, to strengthen collaboration amongst the groups and individuals involved in child's rights protection, in the implementation of the Convention. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA), as the primary burden bearer and focal-point, has actively partnered with UN Agencies, such as UNICEF, ILO, UNIFEM and UNDP, as well as other International Agencies and Foundations.

Furthermore, FMWA also collaborates with other relevant Federal Ministries like Justice, Information and National Orientation, Education, Police Affairs, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Health as well as the Judiciary.

In the same vein, the Ministry also maintains relationships with its State counterparts and with relevant federal agencies such as the National Agency for the Prevention of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) as well as the National Human Rights Commission.

Similarly, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) under the auspices of the National Council of Child's Rights Advocates of Nigeria (NACCRAN), collaborates with the Ministry in the bid to enhance the implementation of the CRC.

Towards achieving publicity, public enlightenment and advocacy on CRC, especially in the run-up to the enactment of the Child's Rights Act, 2003 and in the campaign to sensitize the various State Houses of Assembly to adopt the provisions of the Act as State Laws, the mass media served as a veritable partner and collaborator.

Finally, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) work with relevant Ministries and departments at local, state and federal levels.

**Mr. Chairman,**

#### **4. Constraints in the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights**

In Nigeria, there are various socio-cultural, economic, political, legal and religious impediments to the promotion and protection of children's rights. These factors have been fully analyzed in our current report. Hence, I would like to focus only on a few specific constraints before concluding my remarks.

#### 4.1 On Disabled Children:

A major constraint on meaningful planning for disabled children is the dearth of accurate data. The Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the importance of data on the disabled by including in the National Policy on Education a commitment to carry out a census of all handicapped children and adults. The data currently available was compiled in 1991, and it is a census-based data. Other constraints are:

- inadequate safe homes, shelters or boarding schools for disabled or disadvantaged children;
- ineffective enforcement of national laws, especially on child street hawkers and child marriage, mainly due to cultural resistance; and
- inadequate funding and trained personnel.

#### 4.2. On Registration of Births

Major constraints to full coverage of national registration of births include:

- poor data collection, analysis and dissemination of information on birth registration;
- insufficient resources and materials for birth registration processes;
- lack of awareness of the importance and procedure to birth registration;
- dearth of skilled personnel;
- decline of women's access to maternity centers because of increased poverty and high medical costs;
- distance, bad roads and inadequate transportation to birth registration centres in rural areas; and
- low utilization of maternity centres for delivery due to cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes.

### 4.3 On Immunization of Children

- The nature of massive campaigns, and the large sums of funds expended led to the excessive politicization of the immunization programme.
- There was duplication of efforts, which led to avoidable wastage of funds that impeded the effectiveness of the programme.
- Immunization activities were focused on polio while Vitamin A supplementation was merely combined with the anti-polio campaign, while other killer diseases were unattended to, little was done to combat other vaccine preventable diseases that posed a far greater risk to Nigerian children.
- Routine immunization and surveillance because weak for life-threatening VPD (Vaccine Preventive Diseases) such as yellow fever and Cerebro-spinal meningitis that continue to occur in high proportions

### 4.4 On Prosecution of Human Traffickers:

Efforts to prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking have not been commensurate with the volume and degree of increase in the crime in the country. Before the advent of NAPTIP, there were many cases of those that had been arrested and charged for trafficking, who escaped justice because of the weaknesses in the laws and inadequate manpower to properly investigate and prosecute the cases.

In the last decade, there has been rapid increase in the trafficking of children within and across Nigeria's borders. Syndicates are involved in the smuggling of children and young women across

international borders, mainly for menial work in heavily immigrant dependent economies in Africa, and for prostitution in Europe. A report of the immigration authorities in 1998 indicated that thousands of children between the ages of 7 and 16 were transported to Gabon and the Cameroons, from various points in eastern Nigeria, mainly from the States of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers and Imo. Between March 1994 and January 1997, at least 400 children were rescued and returned to Akwa Ibom State alone. The Federal Government has signed agreements with some foreign receiver countries to expedite the repatriation of Nigerian children illegally transported to foreign countries and measures have been put in place to reunite these children with their families or ease their reintegration into the Nigerian society.

## **5. Conclusion.**

It is pertinent to remind the Committee that Nigeria, as the largest country in Africa, poses enormous challenge, due to her history, population of over 120 million people and over 350 linguistic groupings. Indeed, the complexity of Nigeria is accentuated by her multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic composition, which all combined, necessitates understanding and circumspection in dealing with the country. Besides, our experience in nation-building had been buffeted by long years of military rule; a condition that not only emasculated human rights and fundamental freedoms but also inhibited the development of democratic institutions that ought to promote the development of women and children in Nigeria.

The restoration of democracy in 1999 has rekindled hope, as the Nigerian people now enjoy freedom and choice. The positive developments conveyed in our combined Report are part of the dividend of democracy and the Government, recognizing the future leadership role of the children, is unflinching in its commitment to ensuring that the rights of children to development,



survival, protection and participation are fully guaranteed and protected in Nigeria. In this context, we recognize the huge challenges, including the constraints involved in fulfilling the obligations but we shall be unrelenting in our strive for progress in the holistic development of the Nigerian child.

I thank you all for your kind attention.