

**NIGERIA: STATEMENT BY MINISTERS AND HEADS OF DELEGATIONS AT THE
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES COOPERATION AMONG AFRICAN
STATES BORDERING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN (ATLAFCO) ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER
8TH, 2014**

PROTOCOLS:

Your Excellences, the new Chairman of ATLAFCO,
I stand on existing protocols our extend all countries our thank the kingdom of Morocco for hosting the conference

The Honourable Minister, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Dr Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina CON sends his warm greetings while at the same time extending his apologies for not being present today because of other pressing national engagements.

This delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO) for the commendable role being played in strengthening fisheries cooperation amongst member States and enhancing collaboration and relations with other African organisations operating in the sector such as the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission(SRFC), the Fisheries Committee for the West -Central Gulf of Guinea(FCWC) .

In line with the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of Mr. President Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan GCFR, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development(FMARD),is repositioning the Fisheries Subsector of the Nigerian Economy to attain self sufficiency in fish production; promote strategies for safeguarding the sustainable Fish Stocks through Integrated Fisheries Management while promoting Aquaculture and improving trade through established Best Global Practices in overall fisheries management.

Nigeria is a maritime country with a coastline of 853 km. The surface area of its continental shelf is 46,300 km² while the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covers an area of 210,900 km², within which Nigeria exercises rights for purposes of exploiting, conserving and managing its resources. The harvest of resources of the first five nautical miles of the coastal marine waters is also the exclusive preserve of Artisanal Fishermen according to the Sea Fisheries Law while the Industrial Sector operates outside of the 5 Nautical miles.

The numerous Freshwater lakes, rivers, reservoirs, dams and floodplains, the total surface area of which is about 12.547Million Hectares support Artisanal Fisheries Development and Aquaculture. The Niger Delta is reputed as the second largest brackish habitat in the world. One of its most valued resources after crude oil is shrimps. Nigerian shrimp is considered

one of the best in the world and presently generates foreign exchange worth over US\$65.0 million annually.

The potential of Nigeria's fisheries resources has been estimated at over 3.0 million metric tons per annum and if properly harnessed is capable of meeting the local fish demand and of generating surplus for export .The fishery resources of the nation comprise of a rich diversity of finfish and shellfish found in the territorial waters, the EEZ and the Inland waters.

The drive therefore is to ensure we unlock the potential using artisanal, inland, industrial fisheries and aquaculture to increase local fish production to bridge the gap between demand and supply and to complement the importation substitution drive of Mr. President.

We want to grow our own fish, process what we produce, create jobs crucial for our national security in order contribute to socio-economic development of fisher folks, fish processors, retailers and exporters of fish and fish products; and other stakeholders in the value chain, for Nigeria to become competitive in the export markets and, be transformed to a leading player in the global fish market. This has placed Nigeria's fisheries and aquaculture very high on the development agenda at national and State levels. The collective efforts to engage in the ATA process, including fisheries investment interventions, have been the landmark of the emergence of fisheries as one of the key drivers of the agriculture growth in Nigeria. Investments in the fisheries sub-sector have grown since the 2005 AU/NEPAD Fish For All Summit in Abuja, with more entrepreneurs investing in fisheries and the Federal Government intensifying various fisheries reforms.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has embarked on a 4-year implementation plan under the Aquaculture Value Chain with set targets to increase the annual production of fish fingerlings by 1.25 Billion; produce 400,000metric tonnes of fish feed and 100,000 metric tons of value added fish and fisheries products annually; increase table size fish production by an additional 250,000 metric annually and within four years, add an additional 1million metric tonnes of fish to domestic fish production to attain over 67% self-sufficiency. The plan also targets the creation of 100,000 jobs per annum for the next five years which will include at least 20,000 youths and women. This is being pursued through the following activities:

- The Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GES) :
- In support of the active participation of youth and women in the growing sector through capacity building, targeted business support and mentorship..
- Commercialization of Tilapia production systems and other indigenous fish species to diversify from a mono-species culture of catfish:.
- Development of Fish Farm Estate and Fish Seed Developments Projects and encouraging Public Private Partnership arrangements for Investments in Commercial fish Farms, Fish Seed and Fish Feed developments.

- Registration of Artisanal Fishing craft and Gears to ensure that the Artisanal Sector (which has over the years contributed 80-85% of the total fish production in the country), are well organized and duly recognised.
- Development of Staple Crop Processing Zones: is to promote the commercialization of fish production to address the constraints of the agro-processing industry, drive social and economic impact, offer a superior operating environment for downstream players, while creating a new platform for private sector investment in agriculture.
- Under the Marine Industrial Sector, the Ministry is determined to curb the incidences of piracy and armed robbery at Sea through the provisions of dedicated platforms and has ordered for the procurement of 6 passenger /patrol boats to improve surveillance and enhance patrols at Sea. There is improved inter agencies collaboration with other security agencies especially the Nigerian Navy, Marine Police, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency(NIMASA), Nigerian Immigration Service , Nigeria Port Authority in combating Sea armed robbery, piracy and enforcing Fisheries Laws and regulations in our waters. Nigeria will not tolerate illegal fishing in our waters and will work with international agencies to enforce compliance with IUU regulations.
- Bilateral collaborations and cooperation for fisheries developments: Under the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAF – Nansen) Project, the FAO has assisted countries in the Gulf of Guinea region (Cameroon, Gabon and Nigeria) to develop their national plans for the management of their shrimp fisheries. It is believed that with such collaborations the depleted fisheries resources would gradually recover and there would be reduction of poverty in fishing communities whose livelihood depend on the resources. The country through harmonisation had been exporting her fisheries resources which include shrimps, cuttle-fish, crab body and claws, Sole fillet to the European Union(EU) and has just been recertified to export shrimp caught from the wild to the United States of America (USA).
- The Ministry is also opening up the Deep Sea/Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for exploitation of her Tuna resources by issuing Letter of Assurances to companies to bring in Deep Sea Vessels into Nigeria. Nigeria is a member of the International Committee for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). The Federal Government has acquired a Deep -Sea Vessel Research Vessel
- Bayagbona for the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research(NIOMR) for the exploitation of Lantern fish and Drift fish which will be used for fish meal production to significantly reduce the import of fish feed into the country as well as the cost of fish feed used in aquaculture.
- We are pursuing a holistic approach to Fisheries Development that is taking into cognizance the need for strengthening the human capacity and capability in the fisheries subsector to deliver the programs and projects of the Federal Government.

- Our strengths are the huge natural and human resources; huge market and labour force, and the conducive environment for all year round fish production. We are therefore also promoting investment opportunities in fisheries in the following areas:
 - Large Scale and Homestead Catfish production.
 - Large scale Tilapia farming and other culturable indigenous species.
 - Coastal and Offshore Cage culture to boost fish production.
 - Establishment of Fish Feed Mills and Fish meal plants .
 - Fish brood stock development. and Fish Seed Production.
 - Ornamental Fish Development.
 - Shrimp farming. .
 - Exploitation of tuna and Pelagic fish resources estimated to have a maximum sustainable yield of about 15,000 metric tons per annum.
 - Establishment of canneries for crabs, lobsters, tuna, sardines and Bonga fish.
 - Investment in the development of the proposed Lagos Fishery Harbour.
 - Manufacture of fishing gears, canoes, nets and various By-Catch Reduction Devices (BRDs).
 - Assembly/Manufacture of Outboard motors/Engines and repairs;.
 - Fish preservation and storage equipment.

Taking “**Agriculture as a business**” , Nigeria is determined to become self sufficient in fish, and would take maximum advantage of its marine and aquaculture resources to produce fish, diversify incomes, improve nutritional security and create jobs for millions of Nigerians. After all, fish does not grow inside of sand, but in water. We will optimize our water resources to produce fish in abundance for our population.

Nigeria will remain committed to working closely with ATLAFCO to ensure that the recommendations of this meeting are implemented . Nigeria therefore wholeheartedly support the newly developed Action Plan for 2015-2016.

Thank you .

September 8th, 2014

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