

STATEMENT

BY

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Mr. Chairman

Permit me, on behalf of my Delegation to express the gratitude of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Secretary-General for providing as usual, an in-depth Report on the Scope and Application of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction. The Report which can be described as lucid and comprehensive contains information from Member States on relevant applicable international treaties, their domestic legal roles and judicial practice as well as synopsis of issues raised by governments of Member States for possible discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Nigeria believes that the principle of Universal Jurisdiction is an important principle of international law, as it is designed to prevent impunity, promote adherence and respect for the rule of law and fundamental freedoms worldwide and to punish those in leadership positions

responsible for the most appalling crimes and atrocities, thereby, giving hope for justice to so many, by demanding strict adherence to the rules of international humanitarian law.

3. The increasing pattern where perpetrators of heinous crimes cross or escape into territories outside the original territories where they committed that crime, in order to escape prosecution, makes it imperative for all states to adopt legislation and measures which make it possible for such suspects or criminals to be prosecuted where ever they are apprehended or arrested under the principle of Universal Jurisdiction.

4. As a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Nigeria has contributed extensively to the evolution of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction in criminal matters as developed within the court. Nigeria also, continued to work with other State Parties to the treaty to ensure that the application of the principle

by the court is equitable and practical, especially in cases where it is likely to impact on the political stability of any state.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Commitment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the elimination of impunity, crime against humanity and war crime remain unrelenting. To this end, Nigeria has enacted series of legislations to curb impunity in the country. These laws include: terrorism prevention act of 2011 as amended, The Boko-Haram Proscription Order of 2013, the Federal High Court Practice Direction Order of 2014, Practice Direction of Court of Appeal and Supreme Court, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act of 2015, Nigeria's Evidence Act as Amended in 2011 as well as Terrorism Prevention (freezing of international terrorists fund and other related measures) with the view to bringing perpetrators of terrorist and other related offenses to book.

6. The foregoing notwithstanding, and taking cognisance of the fact that deliberations on this agenda item by the Sixth Committee have been generating serious debate over the years, Nigeria is however of the view that the principle of Universal Jurisdiction should, as much as possible, only be used as a last resort. It must not be used recklessly by States to prematurely or hastily assume jurisdiction over matters when there is a possibility of cooperating with the State where a crime was originally committed, especially through the mechanism of extradition agreements or agreements on mutual legal assistance. Universal Jurisdiction must not be used by stronger countries to force their domestic legal system on less endowed countries through a deprivation of the prosecutorial authority of the latter.

7. Consequently, the Nigerian Delegation wishes to align itself with the position of the African Group and Non-Aligned Movement on the application of

Universal Jurisdiction and reiterates its concern about the uncertainty of the application of this principle. We also call on the international community to adopt measures that will put an end to the abuse and political manipulations of the principle, so as to ensure that the scope of the principle is clearly defined to avoid abuse.

Mr. Chairman,

8. In conclusion, the delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria wishes to use this medium to appeal to the international community to address constructive criticism of all concerned parties and allay their fears through targeted messaging, creating awareness and possible modification of the application of the principle. If properly articulated, communication and creating awareness would certainly engender trust and encourage greater cooperation of Member States on the applicability of the principle of Universal Jurisdiction. This must be

done to avoid even a hint of bias or political