

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, AMB. ZUBAIRU DADA, HONOURABLE
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE 20TH SESSION OF
THE D-8 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DHAKA, BANGLADESH,**

27TH JULY 2022,

Chairman and Hon Minister of Foreign Affairs

Of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,

H.E.....

Hon Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the D-8 Member States

Secretary-General of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation,

Ambassador Isiaka Imam

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit to start by expressing the profound appreciation of my delegation and indeed of my humble self, to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for successful hosting the 20th Session of the D-8 Council of Ministers and the 45th Session of the D-8 Commission. I would also like to register my gratitude for the warm reception and brotherly hospitality extended to the Nigerian delegation since our arrival in the beautiful and historical city of Dhaka. I commend the Secretary General and the entire staff of the D-8 Secretariat for excellent arrangement put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of these important meetings.

2. As we recently commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, let me also convey, on behalf of the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, heartfelt congratulations to the D-8 family on the accomplishments recorded so far.

3. The 20th Session of the D-8 Council of Ministers is taking place at apt time. A time the global economy and humanity is facing one of the most challenging periods in history occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant results. Therefore, this session

provides unique opportunity once again to reassess the progresses and challenges confronting us as an organization. We need to ask ourselves can D-8 serve the interest of its members in the face of the current global realities.

4. To this end, Member States needs to reaffirm our shared determination in delivering a common future based on commitments made by the founding fathers of this noble platform. Nigeria, as a founding member of the D-8, remains committed to the lofty ideals of the founding fathers of our union.

Chairman

Honourable Ministers,

5. Let me reiterate our commitment to the objectives of the organization and reaffirm our desire to continue to partner with the D-8 Secretariat and its Member States to achieve economic prosperity, improve standards of living, and participation in decision making at the international level. In line with the focus of the D-8 on priority areas of cooperation namely; Agriculture and Food Security, Energy, Trade, Transport, Industry, as well as Tourism Cooperation, my country looks forward to continued engagement with the Secretariat and other Member States to enhance collaboration in these identified fields.

6. Nigeria remains committed to those core values of the D-8 and therefore attaches importance to strategic partnership and economic integration of D-8 Member States that would guarantee inclusiveness, prosperity and equality. We must strive to reposition the D-8 on emerging multilateralism map by working to remove barriers that is preventing the organization to achieve the cardinal objectives for its establishment 25 years ago. There is the need to review the priority areas of our union in line with the evolving global trends in order to create a veritable strong institution that will create a conducive environment for attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. The six priority areas of cooperation of the D-8 which includes Trade, Agriculture and Food Security, Industrial, Energy, Transport and Tourism Cooperation continue to receive deserving attention of the relevant authorities in Nigeria due to their relevance to our national development aspirations, and our commitment to our cherished organization. Nigeria therefore, regards the D-8 as an important platform for economic cooperation and a unique vehicle for South-South and Tri-angular cooperation

8. Global issues such as climate change, migration, sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable urbanization, ocean and blue energy, post COVID-19 recovery measures among other issues of critical importance to the international community and humanity should be brought to fore as we strive to achieve common goals and Sustainable Development Goals. I would therefore like to call on the Secretariat to come up with Action Plan that would take cognizance of these importance issues and device ways of factor them into areas of focus for our organization.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

9. The pivotal role of and importance of active and effective collaboration among D-8 relevant national government agencies, and economic operators, especially the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) cannot be over-emphasized. Strategic action plan needs to be mapped out to place at the front burner of our engagement, closer collaboration and cooperation among the SMEs of D-8 Member States. It is a known fact that SMEs account for most businesses within D-8 economies and are important contributors to job creation, GDP and global economic development. It is in light of this consideration and the need to further strengthen cooperation among Member States that my country is proposing for the consideration of the Council of Ministers, establishment of D-8 Centre on SMEs in Abuja.

10. when created, the D-8 Centre on SMEs would work to address the challenge of SMEs in D-8 economies and integrate the small and medium enterprises, promote, encourage, advance, and support the activities of SMEs at the national level as well as within D-8 region. It would strengthen economic, trade and commercial linkages. I am also pleased to inform that Nigeria would be hosting the 1st D-8 Forum on SMEs in Abuja from 23rd to 24th August 2022. The forum is also designed to provide opportunity to agencies in charge of SMEs across D-8 region as well as operators of SMEs to dialogue and exchange useful information and ideas on how to come up with a road-map on best ways to revamp SMEs within the D-8 Member States. It would be my pleasure to receive you in Abuja next month.

11. Before concluding my remarks, let me also seize this opportunity to draw the attention of the Council on the need to consider as a matter of importance, the need for visa liberalization within the D-8 family. Significant and strategic economic partnership and progress may not be achieved when there is restriction on movement of people and goods. As a first step, D-8 needs to initiate discussion on abolition of visa for holders of diplomatic and official passports. This among other measures would go a long way to reposition of cherished organization to play a role it was envisaged for 25 years ago when our founding fathers came together to establish the D-8.

12. I thank you for your attention.

Wassalam Alaikum Waramahtullahi Wabarakatuh.