

DRAFT STATEMENT PREPARED

FOR

H.E. MUHAMMADU BUHARI,

PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

FOR THE

**10TH SUMMIT OF THE DEVELOPING EIGHT COUNTRIES
(D-8)**

8TH APRIL, 2021

Madam Chair,

Heads of State and Government,

Secretary-General,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by extending the fraternal greetings from the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, and communicate his sincere apology for his inability to join you here today. He asked me to convey his best wishes for a successful and fruitful meeting.

2. I would like to also extend our sincere gratitude to Your Excellency, Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, for convening this Summit of Heads of Government of our Organization. I have no doubt that, under your leadership, the D-8 will continue to promote economic cooperation and the overall wellbeing of our citizens.

3. In the same vein, I wish to express my profound appreciation to the Chair of the 9th D-8 Summit, Your Excellency, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, for your commitment to the vision of this Organization and your effort in helping the Organization to realize its objectives.

4. Permit me to also recognize the laudable contribution of Amb. Dato' Ku Jaafar Ku Shaari, the Secretary-General and his team, who have worked tirelessly, in spite of the obstacles

created by the global pandemic, to ensure that D-8 remains a responsive organization committed to economic cooperation amongst member states.

5. I should, at this point, applaud member states for prioritizing the health and social wellbeing of our people by creating the D-8 Health and Social Protection Programme (D-8 HSP) and siting its office in Abuja. This initiative has enabled our Organization to respond to the present health emergency and support member states to achieve the set objectives of the programme office. I therefore, urge member states to continue to support the activities of the D-8 HSP towards the attainment of sustainable development goals 1, 2, and 3 which are; end poverty, end hunger and ensure quality education, respectively.

Your Excellencies,

6. The theme of this summit, “**Partnership for a Transformative World: Harnessing the Power of Youth and Technology,**” is, indeed, relevant in our quest to find solutions to the common challenges facing the world. The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, and its attendant effects across national frontiers, remind us that no country can sustain its economic development without deeper engagement with other nations.

7. As we seek new ways to further enhance cooperation, we must, within our national regulations, put in place frameworks that will protect the fundamental human rights of all youth, promote their development and enhance their participation in every sphere of national development processes.

Madam Chair,

8. The role of the youth in shaping the future is very important as they are our greatest asset in accelerating economic growth and sustainable development. Over the years, the youth have been advocating for inclusion and implementation of development policies such as human rights, climate change, gender equality, quality education, science, technology and good governance.

9. These policies are central to achieving our 2020-2030 Decennial Road Map and Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, for us to have deeper cooperation, we must encourage, equip and meticulously utilize our teeming youthful population to promote and sustain the six (6) priority areas of the partnership of our organization.

Your Excellencies,

10. There is no gainsaying the fact that our youths can either be agents of positive or negative change. Unfortunately, recent events have shown that many young people have fallen prey to the antics of human traffickers and insurgency groups. They are constantly being lured into anti-social activities or forcefully conscripted to insurgency groups. The alarming increase in the number of youth involved in social vices in our countries calls for collective effort in harnessing the innovative potential of our youth.

11. In order to tackle these challenges, Nigeria strongly believes that our youth must be provided with appropriate vocational skills and additional training, and greater inclusion in policy making and implementation. To ensure that social peace and the general welfare of our people are guaranteed, we in Nigeria have established several initiatives to actualize the potential inherent in our youth. Some of such initiatives are N-Power Programme, and Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF), which aim to empower our youth.

12. The Government of Nigeria has also long recognized the need to ensure our youth's active involvement in the democratic process. That was why we wasted no time in signing into law "**The Not too Young to Run Bill**", which reduces the age limit for vying for elective office in Nigeria. This has undoubtedly, expanded the political space and engendered greater participation of young people in politics and governance.

Madam Chair,

13. The COVID-19 pandemic has, no doubt, slowed down our development strides. Nevertheless, as we strive to revamp our economies following the devastating impact of the pandemic, we cannot overlook the importance of harnessing innovative technology and its capacity to increase productivity and empower our youths to create new opportunities and generate new services. Nigeria believes that, for the D-8 to achieve its core objectives, there is a need to enhance cooperation, share experiences and best practices particularly in technology and innovation.

14. As we continue to seek to deepen cooperation, we urge leaders to leverage on the existing Technology Transfer and Exchange Network (TTEN) platform to support Member States' initiative to rebuild economies. In the spirit of solidarity, we also wish to call on our technologically advanced Members to share their expertise with others to develop our countries. It is only by lifting each other up that we can truly uphold the core principles of our Organisation. We are only collectively as strong as our weakest link.

15. Nigeria is, therefore, willing to collaborate with Member States in our efforts to achieve social-economic development through youth empowerment.

Your Excellencies,

16. As we chart a course for the future, we firmly believe that greater commitment should be made towards ensuring that our teeming youth are equipped with technological skills that would promote creativity and innovation. This will undoubtedly engender positive change for the realization of the much-needed economic growth and development.

17. As I conclude, permit me to commend Amb. Dato' Ku Jaafar Ku Shaari, Secretary-General, for his leadership in steering the affairs of the Organization in the past four years. I wish him success in his future endeavours. In the same vein, I wish to introduce Amb. Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, Nigeria's nominee for the post of the Secretary-General of our Organization. I am confident that Amb. Imam, a seasoned diplomat, will bring his rich experience to bear on his new assignment if given the

opportunity. We therefore, hope for Your Excellencies' support for the appointment of Amb. Imam as the next Secretary-General of our Organization.

19. I thank you