Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my country and the Nigerian delegation, I wish to join the other delegations in congratulating you on your appointment as the Chairman of this session and wish you a successful tenure.

Mr. Chairman, you will agree with me that one of the greatest challenges facing mankind in our journey to the next millennium is the increasing scourge of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. This twin problems has persistently defied global, regional and national policies and enforcement efforts. This Commission continues to meet annually to discuss causes of this scourge, explore cooperation efforts and proffer solutions for the implementation by nations, yet the problem persists. Last year, I outlined the policies, laws and structures put forth by my country to curb the scourge of drugs. These initiatives, which are in conformity with the international treaties, have enabled us to record measurable achievements as outlined in our country report to this Commission.

Our increased success at drug interdiction has tremendously reduced illicit drug importation and exportation from Nigeria; drug traffickers now avoid Nigeria’s ports in favour of those of our neighbours and other countries in the region. It is now obvious that Nigeria is gradually losing her transit status. There is a significant decrease in the seizures of cocaine (61%) and heroin (36%) over 1995.
Mr. Chairman, in 1996, 1,187 suspects were arrested. Of this number, 1099 are males while 88 are females. After trial, 537 were convicted, while 13 were acquitted. This demonstrates an improvement over 1995 figures of 333 convictions and 11 acquittals. This achievement is attributable, among other things, to the effective take off of three additional Miscellaneous Offences Tribunals (MOT), thus bringing to ten the number of special courts for drug related cases.

Another positive milestone in our national crusade against illicit drugs is the launching of 20 boats by the National Drug law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for the effective patrolling of our territorial waters to prevent illicit drug trafficking through our long coast lines.

Mr. Chairman, we have also commenced comprehensive preventive drug demand reduction programmes/activities in line with our National Drug Control Strategy. This document which has been launched by the wife of our Head of state, Mrs. Maryam Abacha on 5 March 1997 was developed with the support and assistance of UNDCP. At this juncture, I wish to place on record the high-level of cooperation and support we receive from UNDCP (Headquarters in Vienna, the regional Office and the Country Office). For this, we are grateful.
As for the enforcement of our money laundering legislation, a number of suspects have been arraigned for violation. These trials are however riddled with problems. These notwithstanding, we recorded positive achievements by obtaining the forfeiture of some vehicles and landed properties in 1996.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will like to draw the attention of this Commission to what can be described as the wrong diagnosis of the drug problem by some countries. The world made the same wrong diagnosis and applied the same wrong approach to the proxy wars of yester-years by focusing on peace-keeping, peace-enforcing etc. to solve civil wars, limited wars, local and internal conflicts in certain regions, instead of curbing the insatiable desire of the then two super powers for spheres of influence. That wrong diagnosis has resulted in human devastation and popularised illegal trade in arms and the use of mercenaries. Part of the results of such human destruction are now seen in maimed men, women and children who are either one-legged or without legs as a result of land mines.

The wrong diagnosis of the illicit scourge has therefore, formed a clog in the wheel of successful eradication, despite all strategies and resources being committed at various levels of the global strata. The consumer's high purchasing power invariably provides more impetus for production and trade.
It is therefore of little surprise that the efforts and resources daily being committed have had limited effect. For, while producing and trafficking countries labour to stop such production and trafficking with their meager resources, little efforts are being made by those consumer nations to reduce the insatiable appetite of their citizens. This is further compounded by the refusal of these nations to effectively and mutually cooperate with producing and transit countries, but have rather preferred to point accusing fingers and regard the issue of illicit drugs not as a global scourge deserving concerted efforts of all nations, but a political tool to be used against countries perceived not to "cooperate" with them. This approach has unfortunately led to the adoption of varying standards in assessing or judging the efforts of nations. National interest as distinct from genuine efforts to curb the drug menace are being used by some nations as parameters for acknowledging or determining cooperative efforts.

For instance, the United States votes billions of dollars to fight drugs in source and transit countries, while virtually neglecting the prevalence of domestic demand for drugs. This approach, we believe will never help in the achievement of the objectives of the Global Programme of Action. It is obvious that the United States being "the biggest illicit drug market in the world" (as attested by the International Narcotics Control Board report) needs a review of their drug demand reduction strategy. By concentrating efforts to educate its citizenry on the dangers inherent in drug consumption. This will help global effort.