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Sule Lamido, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nigeria

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Mr President,

I congratulate you on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on your election as the President of this Conference. May I also convey our appreciation to the Government of Italy for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation since our arrival. We note with satisfaction the work done in the last two years by the Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention Against Transnational Crime. The outcome of the efforts deployed is the Convention now presented to this august gathering. Its unanimous adoption by the current session of the UN General Assembly testifies to the resolve of the international community to combat the growing menace of organised crime across national borders.

Mr President,

Undoubtedly, mankind has recorded phenomenal progress in almost every facet of human endeavour in this generation. We are living witnesses to the radical transformation occasioned by the revolution in Information and Communication technology, advances in medicine and biotechnology, to cite only a few areas. Even though disproportionate in their impact, we can testify that these changes have brought people together and expanded opportunities for self-fulfilment in many fields. This progress is, however, today seriously threatened by organised crime, as globalisation now makes it possible for criminals to operate, with devastating effect, in a world without borders. Indeed, in some cases, criminals not only probe loopholes in national legal systems but, with growing sophistication, are also exploiting the advantages of the digital revolution to perpetrate crimes far beyond the imagination of the common man. The fact is that the range of transnational criminal activities has expanded to cover, among others, terrorism, money laundering, human trafficking, illegal trade in arms, corruption of public officials and, perhaps, the most harrowing spectre of the potential abuse with respect to the so-called human genome science.

Mr President,

The fight against transnational organised crime is, therefore, the fundamental challenge of this millennium. Mankind has to be rid of the fear created by these criminal gangs and, with common resolve, send a clear message that we, the peoples of the world, would not cave in under the threat which the criminals pose through their activities. That fight can only be effectively waged and won through clear and coordinated international cooperation, where no nation, big or small, benefits or suffers as a result of transnational crime. It is Nigeria's conviction that this Convention provides us a rare opportunity to demonstrate that commitment through its speedy ratification.

It is common knowledge that many developing countries may not have the capacity to implement fully the provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocols, despite the best intentions. This is, in part, because organised criminal groups which operate within and across borders, have become increasingly sophisticated, with ready access to the latest equipment beyond the reach of official crime prevention agencies in developing countries. We are pleased to note, therefore, that the Convention and the Protocols we are about to sign contain provisions which will enhance technical assistance and the sharing of classified information among State Parties.

Let our shared commitment to combat organised crime reflect itself in a vigorous support for developing countries in these areas. I believe that this will strengthen crime prevention and

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