

**CENTER FOR
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NIGERIA'S ROLE IN AFRICA AND THE WORLD

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JENNIFER COOKE: Welcome, everybody. My name's Jennifer Cooke, I'm director of the Africa Program here at CSIS. And we're delighted today to welcome Minister of Foreign Affairs Chief Ojo Maduekwe and his delegation from Abuja; they were here for our marvelous inauguration. And I'm very glad you could be here for that; it was quite an inspiration here in Washington and I hope around the world.

I want to say welcome Ambassador Obiozor as well and I want to say thanks to Dave Henick (ph) for helping organize this event on quite short notice and to all of you for coming. Just to begin, I think this is a very important opportunity and moment going forward – an opportunity to reenergize U.S.-Nigeria relations. We're in the midst – in the Africa program – of completing a review of Africa policy during the Bush administration, with recommendations for the Obama administration. And one of the themes through that is the idea that U.S.-Nigeria engagement has been neglect, I think, particularly at a senior diplomatic level.

Obviously our view is that this should not be the case. It's such an important partner – important to the U.S. directly, but also important for its regional impacts and leadership – African leadership and global leadership as well. Part of this is on the U.S. side. I think the global crises and crises within Africa have sapped diplomatic attention. There's been something of a perception – I think very shortsighted – that the market will take care of oil supplies and that the crisis in the delta, while on occasion it's marginally bumped up global prices, it hasn't really reached a level that requires a much more vigorous and robust response.

And a much more consistent dialogue with the leadership in Abuja – our view is that, in fact, crisis is worsening over time and it's something that's become much more international in its impact. And these are things, I think, that we hope the new administration will take up and that comes out in the review a number of times. But also I think there's a perception here in Washington that there's a great deal of uncertainty hanging over Nigeria: The court cases, many of which have been resolved, internal dynamics and politics within Nigeria are kind of drawing the country inward in some ways.

And while there are a lot of stated priorities and goals in Nigeria it's very hard, at least from Washington – sitting here in Washington – to discern the strategy and the vision that Nigeria has for its role in Africa and its role globally. So what we're hoping, I think, that you can do today is help us understand what is the narrative and what is the vision for Nigeria's role in the region, for its engagement with the U.S., for tackling the crisis in the Delta and for addressing the many challenges within Nigeria.

I think there are many in this room who are very eager for much greater engagement with Nigeria and ready to push the new administration to a much more robust, consistent dialogue. People here who are very ready to help identify and seize opportunities for greater collaboration and I think that too is where you can be helpful today. Just to introduce our speaker – I think

many of you know him, but Minister Maduekwe trained as a lawyer and started out in private practice but he has a long career in political and public service.

He was an elected senator; he's been minister of tourism, minister of transportation; he's been a legal and constitutional advisor to President Obasanjo; he was national secretary of the People's Democratic Party, PDP; and sworn in, in July 2007, as minister of foreign affairs. Your Excellency, welcome today. As I said, I think this is a great moment to be here and we're looking forward to your talk and to discussion afterwards.

(Applause.)

OJO MADUEKWE: Jennifer, thank you very much. Friends, distinguished guests: I must say I feel very humble to have this podium this morning. One doesn't need to be a scholar or policy maker or even a politician to appreciate the important role of this famous and venerable institute in shifting policies and identifying new directions and getting the context and content of so much that happens. One of the lines in President Obama's very powerful inaugural speech that caught my special attention – everything caught there caught my attention, but there was something that caught my special attention – echoing St. Paul in the New Testament – he said let's put aside childish things – let us put aside childish things.

It's like the president was saying it's time to get to a more adult conversation. That reference by President Obama resonated with me, not only because of my universe that was shaped by being the son of a – (inaudible) – Presbyterian pastor where of course St. Paul was a favorite any day. But I have been concerned that the wonderful opportunities that exist in the relationship between the United States and all of Africa – and I will say particularly Nigeria – there is need to upgrade those prospects, there is need to – using the description of this institute – there is need to make them more strategic.

And I think more strategic is perhaps the the secular version of President Obama's biblical metaphor of saying let's put aside childish things. I was also thrilled when I had my television on at the time when the new secretary of state, who definitely is not a new face to Washington or stranger to foreign policy, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – while being received by her staff yesterday. She talked about the three pillars of U.S. national-security doctrine and said that two out of those pillars belong to the job she will be doing the next couple of years.

She was referring to development and diplomacy – (inaudible) – like defense belongs to the Department of Defense. So putting together what the president said about let's put aside childish things and what the secretary of state said about development and diplomacy – that to me have summarized the particular emphasis I want to bring to the issues I would like to share with you this morning.

I am tired and I'm sure many of you are so tired. We can all collectively feel poor, sick and tired of having Nigerian ministers come to a countries like this and say we're the largest country in Africa, we're 140 million people – and no country ever got a reward for demographic. (Laughter.) I'm sure you are tired of being told about how much oil your nationals dig under our

feet and then they count the money. Actually, what we think we are getting out of it is what they tell us after the counting; I'm not sure we've perfected ourselves even how to do the counting.

So they count the money and give us and then they ship the oil to you. At the end of the month we gather in Abuja – local government, state government and the federal government. We share the money: 70 percent of it goes into salary – we share it among ourselves, the elite – we pass the salary and about 30 percent goes into capital expenditure. We are tired – we are sick and tired of hearing that. We, too, are getting sick and tired of talking about that.

I started developing this sense of fatigue about the kind of statistics that normally come out from Nigeria: large population, oil reserves. For those of you from Nigeria who may feel a little bit embarrassed by my talking this way, I'm always trying to remind myself I'm the number-one diplomat in Nigeria but it's awfully hard thing for me to fully internalize, so don't mind my speaking the way I feel, because if we cannot be honest to ourselves here then it's a waste of time.

I was visiting the Singaporean stand in World Expo in Hannover in 1999 and the Singaporeans saw us coming to their stand, about seven ministers. He couldn't mistake who we were; we were all wearing the Nigerian national dress – the big thing, you know. It's because the Washington's cold, that's I why I'm not wearing my own this morning – (laughter) – because I love that dress.

And the Singaporeans didn't try to be diplomatic at all – that's not they saw us – say, sir, you are from Nigeria? We said yes. And they were boasting the fact that they didn't have oil in Singapore and they told us that what they had was knowledge, which had enabled them to create the thing that has made Singapore so important.

What am I alluding to in some of these fairly rebellious remarks? Nigeria has turned the corner; Nigeria is tired of just being a country of natural resources and not rising up to its true potential. Our most important asset is the enterprise of our people, the entrepreneurship of our workforce, the dynamism and creativity of the Nigerian population. And I'm sure that many of you have met Nigerians, not only here in the United States but anywhere in the world – you can testify to what I'm saying.

Nigerians can be accused of virtually any other thing, but they can't be accused of being lazy. They cannot be accused of lacking in ingenuity; sometimes that ingenuity can be a source of embarrassment. We therefore believe that the Obama election provides an extraordinarily powerful new window for engagement. And for the foreign minister of a country like Nigeria to have said several times since November 4 – and I wish to say it again here – that the Obama election has denied us – the political elite in Africa – of every excuse for continuing failure. We are run out of excuse.

There was a time when the excuse was colonialism. When that didn't quite work we got another word: New colonialism, imperialism – somewhere along the line we talked about the unequal nature of trade relations. There is no limit to what excuses can be offered when people are not ready to take responsibility. And the way Obama emerged as president of the United

States – by simply doing better than every other candidate – has a powerful symbolism for us in Africa, particularly in Nigeria that “Yes, we can.”

“Yes, we can” means put your house in order on issues that create a level environment for competitiveness, the rule of law issue, democratic consolidation, fighting corruption. And so the kind of relationship we want to see with the United States is one that has become a more adult relationship in which you don’t assume that we don’t understand democracy and so you want to start taking us back to kindergarten lessons on democracy. We’re sick and tired of that. Or you think we don’t know what rule of law is, so you want to take us through all that again. Or you’ve made up your minds that we’re very comfortable with corruption and so you want to give us lectures as to who should then be appointed to the offices in fighting corruption.

That kind of approach will not work us. And the reason why it will not work is not as the result of some atavistic return to an outmoded form of nationalism. It will not work because there is already a clear consensus in Nigeria on these issues. So we have to now move from generalities to specifics – that is the nature of the relationship that we want now with the United States of America.

If it’s in the area of the economy, for instance, what is it that if is done by countries will create the environment that can ensure that the fairly impressive rate of economic growth that has been registered in the past nine years does not slack because of the current global economic crisis, but is sustained. We can talk about that. And here what is required is a leap of imagination by a major development partner like the United States of America. Unless there’s a big infrastructural push in Nigeria, especially in the area of power, the best resolutions or best agendas for getting the economy of Nigeria moving will be difficult to sustain.

So here, when I ask you to leave your problems in America and bring your resources to us, but there’s a linkage here. As you stimulate the U.S. economy to get up productivity, might there not be a linkage between being able to also stimulate the Nigerian economy? One, to have implications in terms of job creation in both countries. Africa is the last frontier, really, when you look at development, so our rail lines need to be put in place, electricity is almost nil. If GEC here – General Electric here in the United States – and other powerful companies you have here that have a capacity in this area – looks at Nigeria. They will make money.

So this is the kind of connection we want to have. Take the issue of oil, which, quite frankly – and I wasn’t joking when I said the whole thing was reduced to the level of you did the oil – we don’t even have to dig it – you dig the oil and you count the money and give us. That’s not good enough in 2009. We will challenge U.S. companies that see Nigerian oil purely in terms of get the resource, put it in the ship and bring to America. To look at – that maybe one of the ways of dealing with the Niger Delta challenge – to extent that that problem fed by unemployment – is to improve the downstream sector, to see to it that about 30 products or so, which I understand can be refined out of crude oil – those 30 products begin to be the legitimate focus of manufacturing activities in Nigeria.

The companies will remain American companies; there is value added to the crude oil as a primary product and you export the refined products to America and to other places in the

world, whereas lots of jobs are created in Nigeria. This is a small – what would it take for U.S. oil companies to get into that? What kind of tax incentives do they require from the government? Additional security is something that this government is already very much seized with. So we want this kind of specific discussion in the area of the economy.

If it's about security, the reason why the AFRICOM thing didn't quite take off was because of a lack of conceptual clarity as to what AFRICOM is supposed to be all about. But as we can't coordinate with anything that can enhance our internal security in Nigeria to make sure that the oil, which is still the mainstay of our economy, flows uninterrupted.

But what is the meaning of AFRICOM? Shorn of all of the ideological reservations about it, there has always been military assistance to African militaries from U.S. military. Can that be upgraded now into specifics as to the training of our boys in the navy, equipments that are definitely superior – (chuckles) – to that that is being used by the militants? There is need and let me be honest with you to say that you don't always have to wait for us to come with a comprehensive list of what we want because even the capacity to look at what we want is something that has to be acquired over time.

The whole nature of partnership is that people can talk to each other in a very frank matter. So you can come forward and say based on your priorities this is what you think might be of interest and we will look at it. At least there will be a conversation there so that – what tends to happen, and I've been long enough in government to know that this is quite often the case. Maybe this is an action by presidents or heads of states, ministers and all the glamour, all the diplomats that attends to these things, memorandums of understanding are signed and after that nothing happens again because now the ugly side of bureaucracy moves in.

So you find a Nigerian government coming back 10 years to Washington – a Nigerian government delegation – and it's about the same subject matter, the same conversation – nobody's asking, well, what happened to the last discussion? So I think here we ought to hold each other accountable and say this is what has been agreed upon, this is who does what, when and how. So in the issue of security we can look at that challenge and see what needs to be done because how I look at the challenge of development in Nigeria – it's about state capacity, it's about creating the infrastructures, not only of security but also of human capital that can make Nigeria a strong, modern state.

And so by being a strong, modern state we'll be able to continue to provide leadership for global stability in a world in which the linkages are so intertwined and also so fragile. You can't afford to have a continent like Africa that continues to be mired in one developmental crisis or the other. And some bad news coming out of Africa – who would have thought that this is the time for the mood or something of Washington – the story out of Africa should increasingly be one of good news.

But what happened in Guinea-Conakry is not just tragic, but it's also frightening, because within six months you have had similar situations in West Africa. Mauritania was already problem, there was an attempted coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau, there are some rumblings in one or two other African countries. Nigeria is very, very firm in saying that there are no good coup

d'états, so I guess bad coup d'états. There have been some newfangled theory emerging from fairly surprising quarters about the need to engage new purveyors of this kind of ideology. I call it a new praetorian hubris.

We have had all that before, right from 1966 in Nigeria, when the same messianic involvement brought in the first coup makers. They always think they are the ones who can fix it and that we politicians are no good. Nigeria is now in a very orthodox mood on these issues and our position is that if there is problem of democracy in any African country, the only solution is more democracy and that non-democratic intervention is something that has to be confronted head-on. And we are ready to work alone on that issue if need be. We are able to look at Mugabe in African Union and we led the charge and we told him to his face that the Zimbabwe that for which he was properly acknowledged in the days of fighting colonialism apparently is not the same Zimbabwe he's bequeathing to his people now.

And we condemned the presidential runoff and said it was unacceptable because of the way it was handled and the attempts to muscle opposition. We didn't win a popularity contest on that issue, but thanks to Nigerian leadership on that matter about 17 other African countries followed our lead and at least in our presence no African country spoke in favor of what Mugabe was doing. We've taken the same position on Mauritania – the foreign minister of Mauritania – quote, unquote “foreign minister” of an illegal government – wanted to have a meeting with me at an international conference. I said no, we will not reward a coup d'état with a meeting.

But I received the opposition – the kind of thing people are good at doing here in Washington. (Laughter.) We're also doing that in Nigeria, you know. I received the leader of the opposition to the Mauritanian government, led by the speaker of the parliament, who is opposed to the junta. And in the case of Guinea-Conakry we also were very strong in condemning the coup and at meetings chaired by me as chairman of the council of minister of ECOWAS proprietary to the meeting following the chair by my president as the chairman of ECOWAS' summit.

We got Guinea-Conakry suspended; we felt that there was need to be very united on that issue and we are giving them not beyond the end of this year to return to constitutionality, failing which there will be consequences. But if the political will in African democracies is to remain muscular enough to the point that we just don't end up with resolutions but that those who try to overthrow democratic governments should not only be ostracized – but it's not the quite thing the world is ready for these days – but that there are consequences. There is need for capacity to be able to carry out those consequences.

I don't want to sound too militaristic here, but I look forward to a day when regional standby forces of the continent, which have already been approved by the African Union, but they don't have capacity. A lot of the challenges, whether in DROC or in other parts of the continent that are required a strong African engagement is because these standby forces have not received the kind of support that we have clearly indicated they should have from developing partner like the United States.

So apart from dealing with local conflicts as they arise, a regional standby force – let's say ECOWAS – if ECOWAS takes a decision about a country that has returned to military rule – if we say we want that government – the duly-elected government to be restored to power within 48 hours, look at the profile of the regional standby force. It ought to be clear to the putsches that failure to return to constitutionality means that an African Army can literally, physically move in to such a country.

What I'm talking about is not fairytale: Former president of Nigeria – President Olusegun Obasanjo literally did just that when the prime minister of São Tomé and Príncipe was his guest at summit meeting in Abuja. And the soldiers announced that the prime minister had been overturned and President Obasanjo – well, it was a little bit easier because São Tomé just across our fence there. Obasanjo to the prime minister flew with him in the same aircraft and just literally told the soldiers to drop their weapons and have their man back and that is what happened.

Now, we think that even though that kind of model may not be easy to follow every day – and we got Guinea-Conakry – that lies too far from Nigeria for this kind of intervention. If there is a regional standby force and the soldiers tried their nonsense, they would know that they can be flushed out. So there are many aspects of these things that we believe can be the basis of any U.S.-Nigeria relationship. Now, finally, because this is supposed to be an interactive session, the United States should consider Nigeria a natural partner.

A natural partner because we have shared values, commitment to democracy, to rule of law, to transparency. Natural partners – not just a little but because again, there are culturally dynamics that resonate in both countries. We believe there is need to also appreciate the very positive sides of my country. A situation in which the kind of stories that get out on American TV and media and we're, again, we are sick and tired of being told that because government don't control these things not anybody can do it but a lot can be done.

But the image of the Nigerian that is fed all the time on U.S. media in terms of the negative perceptions of being on the wrong side of the law does great disservice to our relationship. It is not the complete picture; most Nigerians are law abiding, they are honest, you have many of them here in the United States doing great jobs as neurosurgeons, as community leaders, as nurses, as engineers, as managers, as credit card entrepreneurs and so on and so forth. And we believe that one way of dealing with the negative, of the few very small – a country like Nigeria is entitled to have its fair share of criminals. (Laughter.)

You know, most of you are not big, you have a few people that create problems. We don't defend that, but we don't want the negative impression of just a few criminals to challenge the excellent work the vast majority are doing. So there is need, again, to locate those decent Nigerians who are contributing to the American economy, who are adding value to your society. We know that Nigerians who have job of neurosurgeons, but even in NASA – we know there are Nigerians who work in NASA. One day if you see the spaceship looking for the latest planets to locate, it's possible there's some Nigerian contribution to that. We want those kinds of stories to be told.

And if they are told it goes to strengthen the cultural links and the sense that these are partners that can really do business and it is when that takes place that we will really begin to feel that we have a more adult relationship. Once more, let me congratulate you for the epoch-making event of Tuesday.

We will be – (inaudible) – to have been witness to history and we believe that epoch-making event – we called it transcendental, transforming nature of it gives one a greater sense of hope of a more inclusive world, but also a world in which people are going to be judged – (inaudible) – Martin Luther King Jr., by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. Nigeria – I'm going back to the same kind of thing I said we're talking about. But then, there's no running away from the fact that we are the largest population – black population in the world.

We don't want the reward for our demography but at the time we have the same African-American president of the most powerful country in the history of mankind, a country like Nigeria is bound to feel a special sense of privilege and honor. And in the true African tradition, even if you sound presumptuous to say so, you can say as the continent of – (inaudible). We guarantee his success because we bless him. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. COOKE: Thank you so much, Mr. Minister, for that talk. I think that was very encouraging, I think, to hear your willingness and kind of the need to create a dialogue that's strategic now and an adult relationship and focus on the specifics of the U.S. and Nigerian relationship. I think that's a very important message for Washington to hear. I think your being here is a great opportunity and I also hope that you'll keep coming back because I think it's very important to sustain the dialogue, to hear that message again and again and to get into some of the specifics that you were referring to.

So I hope you'll be a much more regular presence here in Washington and of course, we're – and your embassy as well – I hope we can see much more of them in the coming year. I'll open it up for questions. On the security aspect especially, not that that should be the primary leg of our engagement, but that, too, is encouraging, because there have been overtures from the United States in terms of wanting to help on the delta, and the Department of Defense, Department of State coming to the Nigerians saying we want to help you in this. And the response – and I haven't been privy to these conversations – is often, here's the list of things that we want from you; we want – and not necessarily a dialogue going on there.

So I think there's growing recognition, as I said, that the delta issue is becoming internationalized and that there is a need for international engagement on that, but not a clear sense of how the U.S. can engage constructively, and whether there's a real dialogue going on between Nigeria and the rest of the world on that. So perhaps you could comment on how you see that going. But I'll also – and I've brought my glasses today – open up the floor for a couple of questions. Perhaps we'll take, maybe three at a time, and then come back to you. So we have the gentleman here. The microphone will come, and if you could identify yourself and your affiliation.

Q: Leonard Oberlander, consulting international liaison. As minister of foreign affairs, what you have said today is very positive. I would like to ask, in the context of development, diplomacy and security – this is part of the international system – I would like to ask you, as foreign minister, what are the other factors that Nigeria and the United States, in partnership, must confront as opportunities for cooperation as well as competition with the other nations in the development field, particularly energy, such as, directly, the Russian federation and China, Algeria, Libya and Iran and Venezuela, directly or indirectly. How does this positive outlook take into account the cooperation and the competition of this international system we're operating in? Thank you.

MS. COOKE: Great, thank you. Tim, over on this side – Tim Docking (sp).

Q: Thank you, Mr. Minister, Tim Docking at IBM. Picking up on your theme of creating a period of adult relationships here, I wonder if you would apply that to the business community and foreign direct investment and would appreciate it, at a time when IBM is considering increasing its presence in Nigeria, characterizing what you think might be a successful sort of win-win, adult relationship between foreign direct investors and your government.

MS. COOKE: Deidre (sp), over here.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Minister, I'd like to refer my question to the very end of your discussion, where you talked about the tremendous capacity that exists in the Nigerian diaspora. I understand that, on February 21st, if I'm correct, you're going to be launching a database of Nigerians in the diaspora; I was wondering if you might want to explain the rationale for that to our group and how that group of tremendous, powerful individuals can be harnessed, perhaps in a partnership program with the United States, to address specific issues in Nigeria, which could include the Niger Delta issue, which President Clinton referred to a couple of weeks ago when he gave a talk in Nigeria, saying, "Nigeria will not meet its goals if it does not resolve the Niger Delta problem."

MS. COOKE: Great, well, that's a full plate, there.

MR. MADUEKWE: Okay, very instructive, useful questions, and I want to thank you all for that – for the interest shown. On the first one, I liked the way it was framed – cooperation and competition – and some countries were mentioned, but in the context of that relationship, what are additional avenues for cooperation? Now, let me tell you, the issue of oil – again, speaking maybe tongue-in-cheek, but I mean it – oil has not really been a blessing to Nigeria, and I think I'm saying the obvious. None of our great universities were built with the oil revenue – Ibadan, Sukah (ph), ABU, all those great institutions – they were built with money from non-oil exports like cocoa, groundnut, palm oil and so on and so forth.

We fought the civil war without revenue from oil. But unfortunately for us, nearly the war was over, we ran into oil. Because if we didn't run into oil when the war ended, the creativity that went into prosecuting that war and handling it without borrowing money from

outside, I'm sure, would have been available for us to transform a country which, by 1970, had a higher GDP than South Korea and even modern Malaysia and Taiwan. We could have transformed that country to truly be one of the 21st-century, modern service economies, but we can't keep looking back.

The problem was not the oil, which God gave us; the problem was the human beings who were managing the oil. And so we are not really very frightened about our oil reserves, about running out of oil, or indeed, about the emphasis, now, on clean energy and so on and so forth. Of course, we need to pay our bills, which are still heavily dependent on revenue for oil. So it would be reckless for me to stand here and say that if our oil revenues did not come on-stream, it's going to be very rosy for Nigeria, because we are dangerously dependent on that oil revenue. But we are looking at a crisis that will definitely arise from the current global challenge, which is reducing the demand for oil – or at least the oil price is falling every day.

We are looking at it as a wake-up call and not as a crisis, but an opportunity to reinvent ourselves, go increasingly into the non-oil sectors of our economy. And as I said before, the reserves completely run out, how do we now add value, from not just treat it as crude, which has to be exported. So we want to work with countries that will – that are as interested in getting us – and not just looking at this oil as commodity – that primary commodity that has to be taken out – but in terms of value-added. And that also includes clean energy, because Nigeria, because of where it is situated, has tremendous capacity in the area of solar, in the area of wind.

And we want to work with companies in that direction, because we have to worry at the time when a large population, like Nigeria's, will run out of oil, how do we power our economy? How do we make sure that the other kinds of capacity that we have, especially human capacity – (inaudible) – as we aggressively address the issue of tourism, how do we make sure that, when the oil reserves are over, we are still able to do well, there? So we are being a lot more strategic than may appear to be on the surface.

But a dimension to your question which may be – you may not have had in mind, but as I listen to you, that, at the interpretational level, that got into my consciousness, which I will share with you – since a number of the countries you mentioned also share one thing with Nigeria, which is a large Muslim population. We believe that America will find Nigeria a very useful partner in the dialogue of civilizations. The fact that, apart from Indonesia, which is the other country – maybe two other countries – we have the largest Muslim population in the world and with just a few hiccups here and there, we've managed to have a considerable amount of religious harmony in which adherents of these two great historical religions live peacefully with one another.

We believe that as the world moves into the kind of world President Obama, again, talked about in his inaugural speech, a world of shared values – and I, again, listened to the sermon of the first lady – (inaudible) – in America, even though I do agree, but that's my view. Watching the national press, we're told that the lady, Reverend Dr. Cynthia or Sharon – the first woman to preach the sermon at the National Prayer Service. But we have women in Nigeria preaching so many sermons long before now, but common relations for common to this state. Well, she said something in that sermon – she quoted a statement that was made by Muslim scholars about the

kind of world which we should be looking at – a world in which compassion, love, justice are the defining issues. And she said there was common ground with Christians on that.

I find that interesting, because here was a Christian preacher relying on the spiritual authority of some of the things she was going to say, what Muslims call a saint. You can be sure that kind of thing resonates well in Indonesia, in Nigeria, in Saudi Arabia and so on and so forth because we are used to that in Nigeria – having in one family, the man is a Muslim, the wife is a Christian, half of the children are Muslim, the other half are Christians. There is already a lot of dialogue which has been going on in Nigeria on how these two faiths can be not a clash of civilizations but a dialogue of civilizations.

And those few are selected elements that believe that when they kill people, when they blow themselves up, they have 17 virgins waiting for them in heaven. It is quite clear that the angle they are pushing is not approved by the religion they are talking about. And I can assure you, those kind of people are not likely to come from Nigeria, because the brand of Islam that we have in Nigeria is an Islam that is life-affirmative – that believes that God had created not only heaven, he has also created this world for us to enjoy in it. This is why Nigerians are a very happy people.

And I think we can export some of that happiness to America through the kind of interfaith success we have in Nigeria. Now, the – my good friend from IBM talked about what about adult dialogue, adult leadership in the business area? The sanctity of contracts, to us, is key. And we put in place a framework that not only will encourage investors like you to come to Nigeria, but to, in short, three things. One is that the laws that allow you to take away all your profits, if you wish to, that those laws are respected and you don't even have to ask any Nigerian to be a partner.

If you want to have it all to yourself, well, you are welcome to that. Secondly, the judicial system is adequately restructured and reformed to bring about expeditious resolution of conflicts. And then thirdly is the issue of infrastructure, which normally tends to increase the cost of doing business. Well, on that issue of infrastructure, we are making the point that the very infrastructural challenge that makes doing business in Nigeria costly can also be seen as an opportunity for profit, because if you, now, come in as American businessmen to deal with those infrastructural challenges, you may find more money than you are likely to make elsewhere.

Then, on the issue of Nigerian diaspora, I thank you, Madame, for the point you've made, but we consider our diaspora in America to be one of our most important assets. It is our view that the same way the success story in China, in India – just to mention two countries – started rising in profile because Chinese-Americans beginning to look towards China or Indian-Americans began to look towards India, we see a template – we see a script – already tested and successful, that is available for Nigerians.

So in the ministry of foreign affairs, there is a diaspora project. That diaspora project is handling the issues you mentioned about that, obviously. We are not foreseeing our people who live in America to start heading back to Nigeria – (inaudible) – morning. No, but what we – we want to achieve at least three things. One: By them knowing that we know they are here, we

expect them to be even better ambassadors of Nigeria than they have been. We expect them to respect the laws of America – to know that if they run into trouble, it has serious consequences for the image of Nigeria, including business opportunities for Nigerians.

And so we want to celebrate them – celebrate their success and honor them. And by honoring them, we are also likely to honor them – to take more notice of them. Secondly, it's true they remit a lot of money home. I think at the last count, something like 7 billion USD annually went home from the diaspora – that's a lot of money. But often, that money ends up with cousins in the villages who refuse to work because their relation in America are sending money to them and they use it in drinking and quite often, in marrying a third or fourth wife.

They – I don't want to mention which part of the country, but I've heard about what is called "Western Union Alliance" in some places in Nigeria. The Western Union Alliance is a group of people in Nigeria who have relations in America. And they look forward to the remittances from their relations in America every month. So towards the end of the month, it becomes a status thing; you find someone asking you, are you a member of Western Union Alliance, because it's time to go to the nearest post office to collect the money which is remitted from America. And after they collect that money, some of them go back into drinking with it or some other activity that has no economic value to the country.

What we want to do is those – you know, Nigerians love families and it's a good thing – but we want to encourage those Nigerians who are sending that kind of money to send it in a more structured manner. Perhaps the money should be used in buying stocks; the money could be used in investing in a hospital project in Abuja; the money could be used and enable them to do other things, which would enable them to still meet the needs of their relations, who are generally handicapped, not because of laziness but because of lack of opportunities, and also create jobs through microfinance and through opportunities.

So it's a fairly advanced thing we're doing, and any help we can get from you on that would be welcome. Finally, on the issue of diaspora, we think that having regard to the architecture of foreign – (inaudible) – to a country like Nigeria. One subject, and we are dealing with that, could well be to monetize the kind of potential in the relations between diaspora and Nigeria – monetize it in ways like, someone is, say – I don't know why I keep coming back to this issue of neurosurgeon; maybe because in the national hospital in Abuja, we don't even have one single neurosurgeon. And that is serious because it means that if someone has a bad accident and needs just one hour window of intervention, he's gone.

And that could happen to any one of us – doesn't matter how powerful we are. And yet we have got a number of them out here in the United States. There is no reason why those kind of people cannot be encouraged to go home – not to settle, because you guys also do have reason to keep them here because you don't have too many even American neurosurgeons anyway – there is no reason why they cannot be encouraged to go home and do their vacation in Nigeria. And the U.S. government can pay them some allowance for the period they are in Nigeria.

The incentive there is that they are in Nigeria and they are being paid by the U.S. government to offer services for a month. You pay their airfare. You don't have to pay them

what, maybe, Presbyterian Hospital in New York would pay them, or Massachusetts General Hospital, but just some kind of incentive to say rather than going to Honolulu to spend your vacation, or Bali, go home and provide services to folks at home. And we, the U.S. government will pay you for doing what you like to do anyway.

Now, the effect of that is that you are now creating value in our society by supporting the diaspora for an amount that is much less than what you spend anyway as aid – we don't like to use the word aid these days – whatever kind of assistance you want to say – to Nigeria. And who knows? After two or three of those kind of visits, this neurosurgeon may now begin to say well, well, well, America has been good to me.

As an American citizen, I could stay here for the rest of my life and die and be buried here, but the pull of home is quite strong, the challenges are more in Nigeria than in America, and therefore, I think I can go back home, spend the remaining five years of my active life in Nigeria, because the three or four cases I worked on on vacation were paid for by the U.S. government. I could see tremendous opportunities for – this is the kind of creative management of the diaspora asset that can help in the direction of what you are talking about. Thank you.

Q: All right, Peter – yeah – Peter Lewis from SAIS. Mr. Minister, let's not be too quick to dismiss the economic impact of drinking; ogogoro and palm wine are Nigerian products. This could be a stimulus for the non-oil economy. But on a more serious note, I think it's fair to say that over the last several years, the U.S.-Nigerian relationship has been downgraded, certainly from Washington's side, if we look at the types and the levels of engagement and interaction and the commitment of resources.

So there's a new administration in Washington. There was recently a Supreme Court decision, which essentially delivered a second mandate to the Nigerian administration. And so both sides know who they're going to be working with over the next several years. So the question, simply, is how to upgrade the Nigerian-American relationship. What would you hope to see from Washington? What would you be prepared to offer or respond with? And what would be the, probably, most productive points of contact to get that going?

Q: Samuel Ladan Jones (sp). I wanted you to comment on Nigeria's position on the formation of the United States of Africa. This issue has been hovering over the African Union, previously the OAU, for a long time. It would seem as if there are three groups of countries. And the first group are the countries who think it's a reality and it should happen now, a group that thinks it's a myth and shouldn't even – they shouldn't even bother. And then, there is a middle group, which thinks that it's achievable but you should move quite slowly. I'd like to hear your comments about it and what the Nigerian – Nigeria's position is.

Q: Edwin Udenkwo (sp), committee organizer and also an engineer, by profession. My question is on the issue of culture – the linguistic aspect of it. Now, we have a large four generations of Nigerians who have inherited language speakers like the Igbos and they are, many of them, growing in leaps and bounds in this region. What is the Nigerian government doing to encourage the development of these written languages so that most of the states or local governments or businesses that you inquire about, the Nigerian consulates or whatever will be

able to give them adequate information on how to promote these? I know, sir, this is going to be very, very important for the U.S., since we talk about the Gulf of Guinea and most of the major languages spoken in that area is this Igbo language I'm telling you about.

Q: I'm Herman Cohen, a consultant and teacher at SAIS. Mr. Minister, you recall in Sierra Leone and Liberia, when they had their conflict, the international community came together to prohibit the trade in illegal diamonds, which were used for arms purchases and what have you. Would you – would Nigeria be interested in having a similar arrangement to prevent the illegal trade in crude oil, which as everyone knows, a significant amount is being stolen from the delta and possibly other countries in the region.

MR. MADUEKWE: I want to – (inaudible) – letting this audience know that Peter has been my old teacher, even though he is – sorry – he is much younger than I – (chuckles) – has been my old teacher for over 20 years. He has even been to my village many times. He is very popular in my village and he eats all the local food in my place.

MS. COOKE: Drinks all those local wines.

MR. MADUEKWE: Yeah, exactly. (Chuckles.) I want to thank Peter for doing so much for Nigeria over the years to sustain engagement at very important levels. Peter, we appreciate you a lot. The point he has made is very important – the question he has asked – and again, I must acknowledge that, for these very important institutes to give me opportunity today to be here, within a very short time – there's probably a very busy schedule – is all part of what Peter is talking about, because the Nigerian foreign minister appearing before SAIS in a very epochal week – in a very, very historic moment in American history, as this week has been – is sending the right kind of message to all over the place, and I again want to thank you so much for that.

Again, within this week, thanks to the efforts of friends who are here and may be too shy to want to be called by name, I was able to meet with the House committee chairman on foreign relations – Berman. That was yesterday. I also met with the chairman of the African subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Relations – Payne. They're somewhat – the power symbolism in relations between states is one that is too well known by everyone here that I need to go into – I think that if we continue to be talking to each other, in fact, not even waiting until a foreign trip is made – we just pick up our phone and say hi, we want to know whether what we discussed last week – what progress is being made? That would go a long way, and I would like to see that kind of relationship between the ministry of foreign affairs in Nigeria and the State Department.

Luckily for us, we don't want to be very personal about this. Senator – now, Secretary of State – Hillary Clinton is well known in Nigeria, thanks to the important role she and her husband played when President Clinton was the president for eight years, and she's been to Nigeria a couple of times. So I believe – I'm very optimistic that, indeed, all of Africa, more specifically Nigeria, will register very strongly in her radar. And I'm positive that, in the next few weeks, there will be certain strong movements in that direction that will indicate my

position. We're really very ecstatic about her appointment, just as we're ecstatic, of course, about President Obama's election and the inauguration.

But we want to see that this upgrading of relationship, as Peter puts it, is more than symbolic. For instance, if we're on the same page on Zimbabwe – and I believe we're on the same page on Zimbabwe – not only for the – (inaudible) – but those of you may have watched – I don't know whether BBC has talk show on here – who will have watched me on “Hardtalk,” BBC, barely three weeks ago, on this show on Zimbabwe, you will know that Nigeria remains very muscular in engaging the crisis in Zimbabwe, because it is a meltdown there, which I hope, will not get worse than it is. Nigeria will not fold its arms to the humanitarian tragedy that portends – that is worse than what it is already now.

We have about a 1,300 people who have already died of cholera. And I know that when the Guinea-Conakry thing happened, there was a wringing of hands on the part of many African politicians – definitely, there was a wringing of hands amongst my colleagues in the council of ministers when I chaired the meeting, as to what could – (inaudible) – have done when you had the government of President Conte that was not only very corrupt, but also who refused to leave or conduct elections.

So Africa is in a mood, now, for what I call preventive diplomacy, whereby we hold each other accountable. NEPAD has been one powerful instrument – the peer-review mechanism thing – has been one powerful instrument for holding each other accountable.

Now, not all African countries have signed onto NEPAD. We want to bring pressure on the rest of African countries who haven't signed to sign onto that. There's also the charter for good governance and democratic elections; just a handful of African countries have signed onto that. We think that – and I once mentioned this to former assistant secretary of state Jendayi Frazer – I said, America gets more mileage out of Africa if it doesn't come at it too frontally and sound like it's dictating, you know. We're a very proud people even though we're a very poor people and sometimes some kind of pride can even be more – a little more insistent if you are very poor, because that's all you have – the pride.

So we would prefer that, on issues like Zimbabwe, you don't fall into the trap of Mugabe by coming out too strong all the time to – especially if you have not said anything about the land question. We believe that if is a collapse of the state in Zimbabwe, it's Nigerian lives that will be at stake because we will have no choice but to do what we did in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Therefore, if you talk with us and we agree with you on a number of issues as to how to deal with the Mugabe matter, that raises the profile of the relationship. We will not be doing it on your behalf; we are doing it because it is in Africa's interest to engage Zimbabwe and get results.

So there's need for that regular discussion. When that regular doesn't take place and the State Department maybe takes a position openly – frontally – that gives the impression that Africa cannot organize itself, and so, clearly, it is – (inaudible) – of ownership of the very policy what the U.S. wants to pursue, which as I said, we believe is a good policy. But because we have not been consulted – we are not hearing it from Washington – the normal attitude will be to – (inaudible) – or to resist. When I made my statement on that for my president at the AU

summit where I condemned Mugabe for what he was doing in Zimbabwe, of course his remark, which was intended to annoy was that he knows that some of us are being talked to by the Americans and the Britons.

You know, like suggestions that we were not acting purely out of our own volition; we're acting out a script written for us in Washington or in London. Of course, that was a laughable thing for him to say, because I made it clear that Nigeria does not need a lecture from any country to be able to avoid collapse of societies in Africa. We were there in Congo 45 years ago when Congo was collapsing, let alone we were in Liberia, we were in Sierra Leone. We were there before anybody else. We are there in Darfur, now; we have the largest troop consignment in Darfur. And Somalia is a challenge that we have been looking at.

So if there's a failure – and it doesn't make us the policeman of Africa – but again, by history, geography, demography, we feel we have to be our brother's keeper and we cannot fold our arms if Africa is collapse – so we want to have more direct – I'd like to have the secretary of state of the United States put me on the phone and say, minister of foreign affairs, I think we agree on this. You know, it does help. I know the issue of DRC, for instance – Congo – when foreign secretary David Miliband called me and discussed one or two things about that, I know how much easier it was for us to come to some common approach.

So if Africa is to play a very important role in the foreign policy acts of the Obama administration – and here, we're not trying to seek for prestige – the same way the U.S. secretary of state will call his European counterpart, African foreign ministers deserve no less, if only because we enjoy the dubious – our continent enjoys the dubious distinction of providing the United Nations with 60 percent of the issues that the U.N. Security Council is dealing with – 60 percent come out of Africa. So this of course – the foreign ministers of Africa deserve no less attention and direct discussion at the political level than more stable parts of the world.

And Dr. Ladanie Jones, thanks for your question. I'll be very brief there. What is happening about the – (inaudible) – of Africa is not new. It's just history repeating itself, and we hope we have learned the lessons of history so we will not make the same mistakes. At the beginning of the organization of the African Union, you had people who were – who wanted a union government immediately – the radicals like Pomen Caruma (ph), Se Cultura (ph) and so on and so forth. And you had the realists, like Prime Minister Tafawa Belewa, Jamu Kenyatta (ph) and Sales (ph) – you can't rush these things.

Africa is just coming out of the throes of colonialism; there is need to even build national consciousness before you begin to look at integration. Eventually, the realists won the argument because their position was far more rational. And so the so-called Casablanca Group, which were the radicals, and then the Monrovia Group – the realists – they all came together and had organization of the African Union. Now, what is happening is that groups led by the Libyan leader, Qaddafi are at it again, believing that just by declaring a union government of Africa, you have one. And we have told the Libyan leader that he doesn't have parliaments he has to consult; there are no elections conducted every four years on the part of Libya to decide even who their leader is. So Nigeria does not have that luxury of being able to take positions without parliaments.

And we also have constituents that make it clear that – (inaudible) – sovereignty resides. Therefore, to just announce a union government as Zaire is being threatened at the forthcoming AU meeting in Addis Ababa the next two weeks is disruptive, might be very fascinating for a country like Libya, that has the same amount of oil revenues with Nigeria but has 4 million people to worry about, whereas we have 114 million people to feed. But we think that what will be more constructive for Africa is for us to, first to see how is the regional integration thing working. In ECOWAS, for instance, which is the West African sub-region, how well has the mobility of goods and persons succeeded? What about common currencies? You know, build on one building block after the other.

Europe, with states that had already been established for centuries and had a lot of experience on modern infrastructures, still had difficulties in moving from the Treaty of Rome to where Europe is now – to the Treaty of Lisbon – to be the kind of European Union – you need to convince people, you know. So what is my prediction? My prediction is that, as it happened before in the days of the realists versus the radicals, it is going to happen again. But we don't want this thing to end up in – (inaudible) – camps – those who are on the side of Nigeria and those who are on the side of Libya; we believe that when we go to the AU in the next few days, wise counsel will prevail.

What Africa needs is development, not the grand illusion of a continental government that simply raises new flags and new buildings, new protocol lists and the retrials of one ceremony after the other without impacting on local needs. Finally, Adrian's question on language, culture and so on and so forth – I think it's important. We are worried that the diaspora project may suffer difficulties if the diaspora we're talking about, just those who left Nigeria came to America and had a good education and are working in America – if it does not include their children who cannot speak a word of Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa, then we're in trouble.

If it does not include their offspring, whose names used to be Chukwuma, but they are now called Chucks, or whose names used to be Ikechuku, but they are now called Ike – if that's what the diaspora is all about, then it will not move, because if you tell those offspring to think Nigeria, they say what is Nigeria? You mean Algeria? So language is key here, and anywhere government can identify with those who are trying to make sure that Nigerian children in America at least have some smattering knowledge of their mother tongue. We will be quite happy to – yeah.

Our great friend, Mr. Cohen, asked about oil bunkering and blood oil. Thank you. It is a very important question and I'm happy you brought that to my attention. Yes, we welcome any support in that direction. Actually, we made that request at the United Nations when I represented my president during the general debate. We also made it when I met the U.N. secretary general twice and he pledged support of the U.N. I think where we are now is the technical issue of developing the template of how the blood oil thing can be electronically monitored. And this time the technology exists, so something is being done on that.

MS. COOKE: May I ask, where within the government does that kind of strategy reside?

MR. MADUEKWE: Well, foreign affairs – (inaudible, audio break) – have been talking with the minister of petroleum on that, and a committee has been set up to deal with it. Once we are clear as to what – the model of what we are looking at – then of course, the international community will be formally requested to give – but the political word is that Prime Minister Brown is speaking very strongly in favor of it, the president of Yemen, when he came on a state visit, also spoke in that direction. And the U.N. secretary general is quite interested in it. We believe that the new U.S. administration will be able to give every support in this direction.

MS. COOKE: We – thank you so much – we are out of time. (Applause.) I want to, first of all, thank the minister, members of his delegation – and I neglected to mention former ambassador Dafo (sic) Fafowora and Ambassador Onubu – thank you very much for being here with us.

(END)