

PRESS RELEASE ON THE MEETING BETWEEN MS SUSAN D. PAGE, UNITED STATES DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS AND DR. DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR, NIGERIA HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE UNITED KINGDOM ON TUESDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2010

At her request, Ms Susan D. Page, United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs, accompanied by Peter Lord, Political Officer at the Embassy of the United States of America, London, paid a courtesy call on Dr. Dalhatu Sarki Tafida, OFR, and High Commissioner of Nigeria to the United Kingdom on Tuesday, 9th February, 2010.

2. Ms Susan Page began by congratulating Nigeria on her recent election to the UN Security Council. She sought to know about the recent disturbances in Jos, Plateau State, the stage of implementation of the Presidential Amnesty on the Niger Delta, President Yar'Adua's health and on account of this, the prospects of transferring Presidential powers to H. E. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the Vice-President.

3. Responding, Dr. Tafida informed that the Federal Government had taken necessary action to permanently resolve the Jos conflict. He stated, in this connection, that perpetrators of the violence should be made to face the full wrath of the law, to serve as deterrence to others. The Nigerian High Commissioner, citing the recent judgement of the Abuja Chief Judge, stated that the Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan could, indeed, act as President in the prolonged absence of President Yar'Adua due to ill health. He however assured his guest that Mr. President was getting better. He expressed regret that pro-longed military rule truncated Nigeria's path to democratic development and urged support for the sustenance of the country's nascent democracy. He was also optimistic that the Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta would be put back on course in the interest of peace and security of the country.

4. On the placement of Nigeria on the U.S. Terror Watch List, the Nigerian High Commissioner opined that President Obama had the moral and legal justifications for his action in seeking to defend and protect the security of his citizens. He

nonetheless thought that the U.S. President ought to have consulted with Nigeria before the decision was taken.

5. In her reaction, Susan Page informed that wide-ranging discussions took place in Washington before the uneasy decision to put Nigeria on the list of countries of interest in the war on terror was taken. She hinted that the list would be subject to periodic review and expressed the confidence that Nigeria would soon be considered for de-listing based on evidence of enhanced airport and aviation screening and cooperation with the United States. She described Nigeria as a great and valued partner of the United States and noted that the one act of placing the country in the watch list should not be allowed to define US-Nigeria bilateral relations. It was in this context that she called for intensified action towards the signing of the US-Nigeria Bi-National Commission Agreement, so that the process could now be taken forward.

6. Other issues of mutual interest discussed during the courtesy call were the current visit of the U.S. Ambassador Johnnie Carson to Nigeria; Nigeria's agenda in the UN Security Council; US support for Nigerian economy, trade, governance, democracy and civil society development in the country; US policy on Climate Change and the Copenhagen Agreement (2009); AGOA; the Millennium Challenge Account; Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the age-long Western Sahara dispute. She commended Nigeria for being one of the first countries to sign up to the EITI, which she described as a positive development in the quest for openness and accountability in the oil and gas sectors.

**Nigeria High Commission
London WC2N 5BX
United Kingdom
9th February, 2010**