



**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS,
DAME PAULINE K. TALLEN, OFR, KSG
AT THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON AIDS SIDE EVENT ON HIV PREVENTION CO-
HOSTED BY THE JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
AND THE GLOBAL HIV PREVENTION COALITION (GPC) WORKING GROUP HELD ON
THE 8TH OF JUNE 2021**

I thank you for this question. I also want to thank you for inviting me to be part of this High-Level Meeting side-event.

2. As the Honorable Minister for Women Affairs in the Government of Nigeria, an office that I assumed in August 2019, my primary responsibility, as articulated in **His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari's 9-Point Priority Projects for the Ministry**, is to mitigate gender inequalities in the political, economic, social and environmental realms in Nigeria.

3. My experience in various positions in government and my closeness to the grassroots reinforces the importance of political leadership built on team work to help end the AIDS epidemic. **I was Board Chair of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS.**

4. Government is concerned by the fact that **new HIV infections declined too slowly between 2010 and 2019** with gender inequalities as major contributing factors to the slow decline. National surveys have shown an increase in gender-based violence from 2013 to 2018 and cases of rape and **gender-based violence (GBV) spiked in an unprecedented manner during the COVID-19 lockdown.**

5. As Minister of Women Affairs, I have worked collaboratively to raise national consciousness of the urgent need to **address gender-based violence and the root-causes of GBV and other inequalities**, leading to:

- Significant efforts in the roll-out of joint programmes in Education, Agriculture, Health, Environment, Security Architecture, Sports and other sectors.
- Inauguration of an Inter-Ministerial Gender-Based Violence Management Committee to provide a synchronized approach to address all forms of violence against women and children in the country under directives from Mr. President.
- High profile **declarations of zero tolerance for gender-based violence by President Muhammadu Buhari, Governors, and their spouses.**
- Setting up a **gender-based violence reporting Situation Room and Dashboard** to collect and harmonize GBV data at National and Sub-National levels for which we were honored to have the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed launch in 2020.

- Increase in the number of States domesticating the Child Rights Acts (2003) and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015)
 - Sustained male engagement as key to achieving gender equality with **He4She awards** being conferred on men in leadership positions who have demonstrated outstanding support and commitment to the advancement of women.
 - Launching the **National Sex Offenders Register** and Referral Pathway
 - Commissioning the remodelled **Safe Space for Victims and Survivors of Gender Based Violence**
 - Strengthening engagement and participation of women's group including the Network of Women Living with HIV to advocate, empower and provide services to women at the community level.
6. We have also facilitated programmes aimed at reducing gender-based inequalities, for instance,
- **Partnering with the UNAIDS, UN Women and the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) through the One UN Basket Fund** to respond to gender-based violence and prevention of COVID-19 by
 - Providing cash transfer, personal protection equipment kits and sanitizers to vulnerable women.
 - Empowering women to produce face masks and hand sanitizers.
 - Launching a Hotline for reporting GBV in Nigeria.
7. Ladies and gentlemen, the Covid-19 pandemic has set us even further off track by reducing access to HIV prevention services and fueling human rights violations, gender-based violence, poverty and other drivers of new HIV infections. I am aware of the fragility of the HIV prevention response and the risks we face of reversal of our hard-earned gains.
8. In closing, I intend to tackle these challenges by championing:
- Increased participation of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and its state counterparts in the multisectoral HIV response in Nigeria to put vulnerable women and girls at the centre of the HIV response.
 - Sustained investment and **incremental budgetary provision for the issues of HIV prevention for vulnerable populations including women and girls.**
 - Implementation of relevant protective policies and laws that have been passed by the government while **advocating for removal of institutional barriers that undermine gender equality.**
 - Education and empowerment of women and girls in their diversity to reduce their risk and vulnerability to HIV.