

**A STATEMENT BY THE RESIDENT AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR OF
UN IN NIGERIA, MR EDWARD KALLON, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE COVID-19
BASKET FUND FOR NIGERIA,**

Date: Monday 6 April 2020,

Venue: Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Abuja.

Protocol

Excellency, The Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria and Chair of the Presidential Task Force for the COVID 19 Pandemic;

Excellency, Minister of Health;

National Coordinator of the Presidential Task Force for the COVID 19 Pandemic;

Director General National Centre for Disease Control;

Excellencies

Distinguish Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen

Colleagues of the UN System

Members of the Press

Excellencies

It's a pleasure and honour to be with you at the launch of the Nigeria/UN COVID 19 Basket Fund to enhance coordination, technical and financial support to the Presidential Task Force, in its effort to prevent widespread infection and to respond to the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Shortly after the index case of 27 February 2020, the UN system in Nigeria - in accordance with the UN Reform - adopted a 'One UN Response' to support the 'National COVID-19 Leadership to prevent, prepare and respond to the COVID 19 Pandemic.

This is a trying moment for all of us as our shared humanity is under threat of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Societies around the globe are in turmoil and economies are in a nose-dive. It is still unclear what the true magnitude of the spread and impact of the virus will look like in Nigeria. The available emerging evidence is however clear, the only effective response to the COVID 19 Pandemic is testing, isolation and contact tracing.

From preliminary macro and micro social economic analysis, the COVID 19 Pandemic is expected to place immense pressure on Nigeria's healthcare system and will result in a serious economic and fiscal pressure with a risk of a negative social impact if proactive measures are not taken to prevent, prepare, respond and cushion the economic impact of the Pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund has reassessed the prospect for growth for 2020 and 2021, declaring that we have entered a recession – as bad as or worse than in 2009. We must respond decisively, innovatively and together to suppress the spread of the virus and address the socio-economic devastation that COVID-19 is causing in our world today.

The magnitude of the response must match the scale of the crisis -- large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive, with country and international responses being guided by the World Health Organization. And it must be multilateral, with countries showing solidarity to the most vulnerable communities and nations. In the words of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "There is no other way to deal with global challenges than with global responses organized in a multilateral way."

On 23 March 2020, the national COVID 19 leadership of Nigeria met with the UN Country leadership and key bilateral donors to discuss the unfolding emergency. We collectively agreed to adopt the "Four Ones" guiding principles of engagement for national authorities and partners to respond to the pandemic: (i) One National COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Pandemic Response Plan; (ii) One COVID-19 National Coordinating Authority with a broad-based multi-sector mandate; (iii) One COVID-19 M&E System for tracking and reporting progress; and (iv) One COVID-19 Financing and Investment Platform.

Consequently, the **COVID-19 Basket Fund** has been designed to serve within the **One COVID-19 Financing and Investment Platform**, through which the different stakeholders (including UN, other multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as private sector donors, foundations and philanthropists) can channel their financial contributions to the multisectoral efforts of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 Response.

The National COVID 19 Multisectoral Response Plan is developed around 10 key pillars, including coordination. The UN would like to urge investment into these 10 key pillars identified in the government plan and support nationwide

socio-economic interventions of vulnerable groups, particularly on efforts aimed at scaling up surveillance, testing, isolation, contact tracing, personal protection equipment for medical staff, disinfectants for medical facilities, risk communication, community engagement and clinical management of the critically unwell COVID-19 patient.

We must tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of this crisis, with a focus on the most vulnerable and most affected people: women, older persons, people living with disabilities, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises and the informal sector. We must pay attention to those in humanitarian and conflict settings where the potential risk of community spread is high. The Basket Fund will also address critical areas of the National Multi-sectoral Pandemic Response Plan

I must commend the Federal Government and states, for their efforts in mobilizing financial and non-financial resources to address the impact of COVID-19. However, they cannot do it alone. For the country to succeed in eliminating the coronavirus threat, it calls for all of us to act cooperatively across all sectors and support the government's efforts at this time of a great human need.

I therefore call on all stakeholders to work together to contain the COVID 19 Pandemic in Nigeria. The world is facing an unprecedented test. And this is the moment of truth. We urgently need an immediate coordinated health response to suppress transmission and end the pandemic. Debt alleviation must be a priority – including immediate waivers on interest payments for 2020.

The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis must lead to a different economy. Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building resilience, ensuring equal access to social services through systems strengthening, in particular health systems strengthening, and investments in building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other global challenges we face.

Thank you

Edward Kallon

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator