We are natural partners, taking inspiration from each other, working shoulder-by-shoulder to address challenges and mutual interests in Nigeria, in Europe and on the world stage. And as brothers and sisters we exchange a few punches from time to time, but always with a respect only possible between close friends and family members.

What is good for Nigeria is good for Europe – that is maybe the simplest way to describe our relations.
But behind those words there is a truly multidimensional engagement in a partnership that I believe has never been better, but that arguably is also more needed than ever before.

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And there is no doubt Nigeria is only increasing in international importance. Whenever there is a pilot project for something in the EU you can be absolutely certain that Nigeria is selected. In fact we have so many pilots here that sometimes I am wondering whether I am running a diplomatic mission or an airport.

Jokes aside, excellencies

We use to say about the EU that we are united in diversity – just like Nigeria in a sense – but unity and democracy must never be taken for granted, not in Europe nor in Nigeria. It must be nourished.

We have seen challenges, but we have also seen how crisis can make us stronger. And we have seen how the questioning of our fundamental values will only make us more determined to defend them. Together, we are stronger.

Standing by those most vulnerable does not make us weak. Rather that is a reflection of our strength.

Whether promoting the rights of women and girls, youths or people with disability.

Today we decided to focus our celebration around our mutual engagement to promote democratic governance. This is the very core of the European Union and the defining basis of everything we do in Nigeria.

Of course the proximity of the next general elections, before the next Europe Day, is on everybody's mind these days.

Supporting as always Nigerian visions, Nigerian policies and Nigerian initiatives. Not believing that a European recipe can be exported and replicated one-to-one, but truly building on the democratic progress seen in Nigeria over the years.

In fact our engagement for democratic governance is one of the very best examples of what we like to call an integrated approach, where we bring together all our available tools into one coherent and comprehensive actions.

- With continued observation of elections since 1999
- With development cooperation support for INEC, the National Assembly and civil society
- and, of course, through very intensive political dialogue

This same approach is applied across the board

With the altogether 1.5 billion Euros provided in development cooperation to Nigeria over the last decade.

In our engagement in the North East, where we have provided humanitarian aid and development support in the order of 400 million Euros, while supporting the multinational task force

Supporting access to water sanitation and health throughout the country

Supporting affordable and sustainable energy for all.

Our engagement to support human rights in general and women's rights in particular

And of course another flagship is our ample support for to regional integration in West-Africa with ECOWAS with all-together 1 billion Euros for 2014-2020

Dear Friends,

With irregular migration and disturbing conditions for Nigerians falling victims of scrupulous traffickers and some ending up in modern day slavery, we have a joint task in front of us to solve the immediate crisis while laying the cornerstones for sustainable way forward. President Buhari himself has mentioned the importance of reaching out to European partners to deal with this matter.

This is why we have helped the safe and voluntary return of more than 8000 Nigerians since last year, while engaging with stakeholders across the country to seek a holistic approach on the way forward where we invest in the youth and make sure that we build more on the good sides of mobility, while ending trafficking and exploitation.

As part of this effort, the European Investment Bank is looking at increasing activities in Nigeria, and of course, the biggest investment bank in the world must have a bigger presence in the biggest country in Africa.

Meanwhile our trade relations continue to grow.

EU remains by far the biggest trading partner for Nigeria with total trade amounting to 25.3 billion Euros last year, and with a fifty per cent surplus for Nigeria. That is an increase of 27 per cent since 2016. We can do more to make ours a win-win situation and partnership for doing business

By the end of the day, the diversification of the economy is vital to create opportunities for all, in particular considering population growth.

I could go on all night on all the different initiatives, but then you would all leave...

So let me instead thank you, thank our member states, without you we are nothing. Thanks our Nigerian partners, thank my wonderful staff for making this possible, and last but not the least, my
wife.

Thank you all for coming and remember that what is good for Nigeria is good for Europe.

At toast for a great Nation and the EU, for our shared values, for democracy, and for

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