

Ambassadors for Peace Ready to Ensure Peaceful Nigeria Vote

Raphael Ogar Oko
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Abuja, Nigeria - Ambassadors for Peace came from all over Nigeria to be trained as election observers to ensure that upcoming elections will be peaceful.

A one-day training session was held on Jan. 22, 2015, at the National Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Abuja, the national capital. The West African Network of Election Observers (WANEO), a recognized and accredited election observer organization that has been involved in several elections, recently asked UPF-Nigeria to submit the names of 144 Ambassadors for Peace to be trained as local election observers in the February 14 general elections [postponed to March 28]. But more than 180 people came for the training, traveling from Lagos, Taraba, Jigawa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Nasarawa, Benue and other states.

With increasing requests from Ambassadors for Peace who are keen to be mobilized as election observers, UPF-Nigeria is making plans to extend the training to a few selected cities.

The training session had facilitators from the Economic Community of West African States, the National Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the Red Cross and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps as well as UPF-Nigeria. Participants were inspired by the content of the training and by UPF's determination to create opportunities for Ambassadors for Peace to contribute to critical national community service.

Prince Herbert, coordinator general of WANEO, in his welcome address commended the UPF Ambassadors for Peace for their commitment to ensuring peaceful elections in Nigeria. Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko, UPF-Nigeria secretary general, gave an overview of UPF's commitment and plans for the elections in Nigeria. He introduced the UPF-Nigeria Agenda January to June 2015, which focuses on ensuring peaceful elections in February and a smooth transition in May 2015. "UPF-Nigeria wishes to use this opportunity to call on all Ambassadors for Peace and political leaders as well as other stakeholders to become Ambassadors for Peaceful Elections," said Dr. Oko.

Professor Oshita O. Oshita, director general of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, in his opening remarks—which were delivered by Barrister Gabriel Jiya, director of the institute's Department of Democracy and Development Studies—urged the Ambassadors for Peace to work diligently as election observers. One of Nigeria's most outstanding Ambassador for Peace, Chief Mike Ozekhome (Senior Advocate of Nigeria), gave an inspiring goodwill message that was applauded several times. He spoke about the vision of UPF and the commitment of the UPF founders, Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, to world peace, which he said should inspire each person to get involved with the heart of parents in the situation in Nigeria.



Lectures on the following topics were presented at the workshop:

- “Introduction to Election Observations: What to Observe” by Prince Herbert of WANE0
- “Election Observation – ECOWAS/ International Standards and Best Practices” by Mr. Francis Oke, head of the Electoral Assistance Division, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission
- “Practical Experience of an Election Observer - Locally/Internationally” by WANE0
- “The Role of Election Observers Towards a Peaceful Election, 2015” by Femi Ibrahim, National Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)
- “INEC Guidelines for Election Observers” by Mrs. Dorathy Inyang from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
- “Effective Communication Skills/Election Report Writing” by Dr. George Ikpote of UPF-Nigeria
- “Basic Facts of First Aid” by a facilitator from the Red Cross
- “Personal Security in the Field” by Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, Federal Capital Territory command
- “Team/Group Work and Role Play (Mock Election)” facilitated by WANE0
- “Reflections on the UPF Agenda January to June 2015” by Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko

The significance of the Feb. 14 general elections was emphasized: These elections will produce the leaders who will govern Nigeria until 2019 and will be the critical stakeholders in deciding the future of Nigeria from 2020. UPF-Nigeria views this training as a special national condition by the Ambassadors for Peace to contribute to the peacebuilding process in Nigeria and as an opportunity to help ensure that the elections are peaceful and will lead to a peaceful transition of power in May 2015.

At the end of the training session, participants endorsed the Ambassadors for Peace Pledge for Peaceful Elections and commissioned each person to spread the message of peaceful election. The resource persons from ECOWAS and the director general of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution were presented with an Ambassador for Peace certificate and the autobiography of UPF Founder Dr. Sun Myung Moon, As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen, while Mrs. Dorathy Inyang of the Independent

National Election Commission was presented with a certificate as an Ambassador for Peace. They all pledged to join UPF and work toward a peaceful Nigeria.



UPF-Nigeria is now working with the West African Network of Election Observers to forward the names of the Ambassadors for Peace to the Independent National Electoral Commission for documentation to serve as local election observers in different states in Nigeria. Over 144 Ambassadors for Peace have been mobilized and trained to observe elections in at least 288 polling units and to observe about 144,000 electorates as a special condition for peaceful elections and transition 2015 in Nigeria.

A certificate of participation was issued to each of the Ambassadors for Peace, who were also provided with relevant materials for election observation in Nigeria. In the days ahead, UPF-Nigeria will reach out to appeal for support for the logistics of deploying the over 144 Ambassadors for Peace to different states and cities in Nigeria. The participants were in high spirits and made commitments to promote interfaith, interethnic and interparty dialogue for peaceful elections in their local communities and streets of residence. In addition, some of the Ambassadors for Peace pledged to host a Soccer for Peaceful Elections tournament before and during the election week as a way of promoting peaceful elections in 2015.

