

International Day of Families Observed in Nigeria

Raphael Ogar Oko
May 15, 2015



Abuja, Nigeria—A UPF-organized summit marked the 2015 United Nations International Day of Families by recommending the establishment of a national Ministry of Family Affairs.

The summit on marriage and family took place on May 15, 2015 at the National Merit Award House located in the Maitama District of the capital, Abuja.

After Mrs. Maria Dauda Jev gave the welcoming remarks, Engr. Babatunde Adegbesan read UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's special message. Among other issues, Dr. Ban emphasized: "On this International Day, let us resolve to change legal and social norms that support male control over women, reinforce discrimination and prevent the elimination of violence against vulnerable family members. As we shape a new sustainable development agenda and strive for a world of dignity for all, let us stand united for women's and children's rights in families and societies at large."

The UPF statement on families was read by UPF-Nigeria Secretary General Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko. He stated that family building is essential for peace and sustainable development of the society and the nation.

Goodwill messages in support of the event were presented by representatives of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Abuja radio station Love FM 104.5, the nonprofit group Global Initiative for Harmony in Nigeria, the ARM Life Insurance Company and the Bwari and Gwagwalada Area Council Marriage Registries.

Dr. George C. Ikpot, UPF-Nigeria director of international affairs, gave the keynote address on the significance of marriage and family. He introduced the fundamental teachings of the UPF founders and emphasized the need for participants to study the work of UPF and consider participating in the next Interfaith Peace Blessing.

The theme of the 2015 UN International Day of Families, "Men in Charge? Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contemporary Societies," was discussed. Muslim and Christian clerics offered prayers for Nigerian families and also for a peaceful transition of governments on May 29, when the newly elected president would be sworn in.

The event featured the launch of the UPF-Nigeria National Directorate of Marriage and Family Affairs. This group will work with governmental and nongovernmental institutions connected to families and will offer technical assistance to marriage registries and advocate the introduction of marriage and family education in schools and colleges.

In addition, the participants called on the incoming government to establish a Ministry of Family Affairs as well as a National Marriage Institute.

As part of the Day of Families activities, each of the over 120 participants picked a partner with whom they pledged to connect as family partners for peace.



In the closing session UPF-Nigeria recognized outstanding individuals and organizations in four categories. First was the UN International Day of Families Award, given to 15 couples who have been married for over 20 years and were recommended by their communities or organizations.

The second set of awards was presented to organizations and government agencies that have worked to strengthen marriages and families in Nigeria. Recipients included NAPTIP, Love FM 104.5, the Bwari and Gwagwalada Marriage Registries, Global Initiative for Harmony in Nigeria and ARM Life Insurance Company.

The following individuals whose work has been outstanding in their communities were appointed as Ambassadors for Peace:

Alhaji Umar Mohammed Kareto Lawan
Lady Cynthia Onyinye Anieke
Kevin Usunobun Ebhohimen
Samuel Enoch Akpan
Chief Dannu Nwambueze Nwankwo
His Eminence Ezeji C.N.E. Ukaegbu
Chief Raymond M. Okoye
Architect Chief Dan Ezimora
Mallam Bukar Al-amin

The final award was the Governor of the Year on Marriage and Family Affairs Award, which UPF-Nigeria initiated as part of the 2015 United Nations International Day of Families. The award focuses on good promises and best practices among serving Nigeria state governors who support marriage and family building for national integration. UPF-Nigeria Secretary General Dr. Raphael Oko provided background information on the good promises and best practices of four state governors in Nigeria and asked the participants to vote for the governor who should be declared winner.

The assembly acknowledged the efforts of Kano State Governor Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje for the Hisbah marriage program. They also commended Imo State Governor Owelle Rochas Anayo Okorochoa and Akwa Ibom State Governor Godswill Obot Akpabio for their cooperation during the 2014 interstate wedding of Governor Rochas' daughter, which was chaired by Governor Akpabio in Imo State, where the governors called for the promotion of interstate marriages among Nigerians.

In view of the contribution to national unity and integration, Nasarawa State Governor Umaru Tanko Al-Makura's recent offer to National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members serving in his state emerged as the winning promise. The governor recently promised at the State NYSC Orientation Camp in Keffi that any Batch A corps member from any Nigerian state who marries a citizen of Nasarawa State will be given immediate employment. Consequently, the governor was given the Governor of the Year on Marriage and Family Affairs award for 2015.



The event ended with the award recipients commending the work of UPF and a voice vote in support of the summit communiqué. In addition to the creation of a Ministry of Family Affairs and the establishment of a National Marriage Institute, the communiqué called for a constitutional provision for the office of the president's wife as first lady of the nation, and for promotion of gender equality through couple leadership, the introduction of couple degree programs in universities and special incentives by banks to encourage couple banking, among others.

Following the closing prayers, an announcement of upcoming events was made, including the visit of Ambassadors for Peace to the outgoing president of Nigeria. The program was reported on national radio and television as well as on Love FM 104.5.

Read a report in thedailytrust.com.

