

Speaking to Leaders Longing for Lasting Peace in Nigeria

Raphael Ogar Oko
July 2015



The writing presenting As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen

I led a team of UPF Nigeria staff members and some ambassadors for peace on a courtesy visit to the outgoing governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Mukhtar Yero, at Government House, Kaduna, to introduce UPF and True Parents' global work. I wanted to commend him for his support for peace initiatives in Kaduna State, which has led to a relatively peaceful situation there. I complimented him on his recent conduct in accepting defeat by his opponent during the general elections on April 11 and for congratulating his opponent, a practice rarely engaged in by political leaders in Africa. After the private meeting, I was invited to speak at the council chambers to all the members of the Kaduna State Executive Council, who were at Government House to attend the monthly council meeting.



Peace ambassadors that accompanied the writer

The event at the state executive council began with the permanent secretary at Government House introducing our UPF Nigeria team. Following this, I spoke to the assembled council members. I focused on UPF's activities, our principles for peace and the need for political leaders, faith based organization leaders and other non-governmental organization leaders to work together. In particular, I spoke on the proposal for the creation of a federal ministry of inter-religious affairs, a National Assembly committee on inter-religious affairs as well as the introduction of inter-religious education in schools, colleges and

universities as a localization of the UPF founders' call for an inter-religious council in the United Nations.



UPF members and peace ambassadors visiting the retiring governor

I informed the governor and members of the Kaduna State Executive Council about UPF activities to strengthen marriage and family life.

Council members applauded the announcement that UPF Nigeria will be launching the National Directorate of Marriage and Family Affairs on May 15, 2015, as part of activities to commemorate the 2015 International Day of Families. I used the visit to congratulate the people of Kaduna State for their peaceful conduct during the general elections. I said, “While congratulating you for accepting defeat and commending the citizens for the peaceful election, let us not ignore the fact that seeds of division along religious and ethnic as well as political lines have been planted in the hearts of Nigerians.



Visitors taking a photograph with the governor

We believe that your acceptance of the outcome of the elections made it possible for the people to remain peaceful despite the tense situation in the state during the elections. Our visit at this time is to again reemphasize our message that this is the time for us to come together, beyond our past differences, and work together as one people, one nation and under one God.”

Governor Yero welcomed the UPF delegation and thanked the State Executive Council members for being part of the visit, too. He commended UPF for the work that we are doing around the world and in Nigeria. He spoke on the issues raised and pointed out that Kaduna State has already created structures and programs to promote inter-religious harmony and cooperation. He supported the idea of calling on the federal government of Nigeria and the National Assembly to create governmental structures for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. He expressed his availability to attend UPF events locally and internationally and said, “I am graduating from being a political governor to becoming a peace governor,” a position he emphasized as being a lifelong calling.



The retiring governor

We later presented the outgoing governor with a certificate designating him an ambassador for peace and a copy of *As a Peace Loving Global Citizen*.

As he received the book, we announced that by reading the autobiography of UPF's founder, you would find inspiring words that guide you on how to live in peace so that whenever you die, you can rest in peace.

Members of the State Executive Council requested copies of the autobiography, which we were unable to provide due to the few copies we had in our office. We are hopeful that readers might donate copies of the autobiography, which we will distribute to the council members that requested them.

The government house media crew reported the event on local radio and television stations in Kaduna.



Michael Ojahom a lawyer and human rights activist presenting a medal to the governor