

UPF Team Visits Nigerian State Governor, Executive Council

Raphael Ogar Oko
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Kaduna, Nigeria—The UPF-Nigeria secretary general has commended the outgoing Kaduna State governor for supporting peace initiatives and for his conduct in accepting defeat in recent general elections.

During an April 29, 2015, visit to the Government House in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State, Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko and a team of UPF-Nigeria staff and Ambassadors for Peace had a personal meeting with Governor Alhaji Mukhtar Yero.

Dr. Oko commended Governor Yero for his support of peace initiatives which have led to a relatively peaceful situation in Kaduna State. The governor was also commended for his conduct in accepting defeat during the recent general elections, when he telephoned his opponent to congratulate him on his victory—a gesture exhibited rarely until now by African political leaders.



Dr. Oko also introduced the global work of the UPF founders to the governor.

Following the private meeting, Dr. Oko was invited to speak at the monthly meeting of the Kaduna State Executive Council. After he and his team were introduced by the permanent secretary at the Government House, Dr. Oko spoke about UPF activities, the UPF principles for peace and the need for political leaders and leaders of faith-based and nongovernmental organizations to work together.

In particular, Dr. Oko urged Nigeria to create a Federal Ministry of Interreligious Affairs and a National Assembly Committee on Interreligious Affairs, and to introduce interreligious education in schools, colleges and universities as a local example of the interreligious council at the United Nations that the UPF founders have long called for.



The governor and the Kaduna State Executive Council were also informed about UPF activities to strengthen marriage and family life. Council members applauded the announcement that UPF-Nigeria would launch a National Directorate of Marriage and Family Affairs on May 15, 2015, as part of activities to commemorate the 2015 United Nations International Day of Families.

The visit was also an opportunity to congratulate the people of Kaduna State for their peaceful conduct during the general elections. Dr. Oko 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. 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 re-emphasize 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 from one God.”

Governor Yero welcomed the UPF delegation and thanked the State Executive Council for being part of the visit too. He commended UPF for the work that is being done around the world and in Nigeria. He spoke on the issues raised and pointed out that Kaduna State already has created structures and programs to promote interreligious harmony and cooperation. He supported the idea of calling on the Federal Government and the National Assembly to create governmental structures for interreligious dialogue and cooperation. He expressed his availability to attend UPF events locally and internationally and also mentioned that he “is graduating from being a political governor to becoming a peace governor,” a position he emphasized as a lifelong calling.

The governor was later presented with a certificate designating him as an Ambassador for Peace and with a copy of the autobiography of the UPF founder, As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen. As he received the book, he was told that by reading the autobiography of the UPF founder, he would find inspiring words that would guide him on how to live in peace so that some day when he dies, he can rest in peace. Members of the State Executive Council also requested copies of the autobiography, which UPF was unable to give them due to the few copies in its office. It is hoped that copies can be donated to fill such requests.

The Government House media crew reported the event on the local radio and television stations in the state.