

## Global Peace Leadership Conference, Abuja, Nigeria

November 7, 2013

Address



Your excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen: It is a great honor to join with you here today in Abuja for this very important conference on “Moral and Innovative Leadership: Building Sustainable Peace for a Prosperous Future.”

This is a theme of the greatest significance for this nation of Nigeria, the region of West Africa and the entire continent of Africa as we stand at this moment of historic transition. That is why addressing the fundamental issues of a new leadership paradigm to propel this nation forward and all of Africa, is so important in the history of not just Nigeria but this entire continent.

I would like to express my special appreciation to His Excellency President Goodluck Jonathan for contributing his input and support of this initiative. Among the many distinguished participants who are here with us today, I would like to give special recognition to our illustrious friend and many ways mentor, Sir James Mancham, founding president of Seychelles and former President Amani Karume of

Zanzibar for launching the African Presidential Leadership Mission on Peacebuilding; I would also especially like to give my thanks to the chairman of GPF Africa, my very good friends and someone who constantly keeps me on my toes, Dr. Manu Chandaria of Comcraft Chairman and my good friend from the United Nations Dr. Markendey Rai, both of whom are members of GPF’s Global Leadership Council. Could you please give them a round of applause.

Particular recognition should be given to the many religious leaders and traditional rulers who have contributed to the One Family Under God campaign of peacebuilding here in Nigeria with GPF including Archbishop Cardinal John Onaiyekan, I hope I’m saying that right, representatives of the Sultan of Sokoto, Bishop Sunday Onouha, Reverend John Hayab and Sheik Maraya of Kaduna, among many, many others. Please forgive me if I did not pronounce your name correctly.

This conference has been organized by the Global Peace Foundation in partnership with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution. However, many other people and organizations have joined with us, together as owners of this cause and worked tirelessly to make this conference, and the subsequent “One Family under God” campaign, a resounding success. Please give them all a round of applause.

I particularly want to appreciate the Nigerian Inter-Faith Action Association and all the other faith leaders engaged in this work. We would not be here today if it was not for their sincere devotion and ownership over this powerful vision. Could we give them all a round of applause?

Ladies and Gentlemen, Africa today stands atop a new pinnacle with the potential of climbing even higher in its very near future. Dramatic new possibilities are opening up. The world is beginning to see the potential of Africa. The continent as a whole is growing faster than any other region in the world with a \$2 trillion economy.

By 2035 the African workforce will be larger than that of China’s. The era of military strongmen, coup d’états and civil unrest seems to be in the decline, despite the often-jaded coverage of this region by the international press corps.

But what’s even more promising is the possibility of stability, peace and prosperity through the rise of constitutional democratic regimes, a process that is engaging more and more Africans in actively shaping the futures of their nations and the continent as a whole.

We began our work in Kenya, in the wake of the terrible 2008 post-election violence, holding public festivals and sponsoring grassroots projects to promote peace and reconciliation. Here in Nigeria I am proud to announce the launch of two projects, the Character and Creativity Initiative (CCI), and the All Lights Village Project, along with the Africa Peace Service Corps.

The large youth populations in Africa will shape the future of their countries for better or worse. CCI will inculcate the moral outlook and the skills needed for them to succeed, and Nigeria can become a pioneer in this movement for all of Africa.

CCI's approach is innovative because it engages the school and local community in developing a culture that promotes moral and innovative leadership in practical ways. In Kenya, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education there are plans to extend CCI throughout all of Kenyan schools.

The prestigious national think-tank, KIPPRA, reviewed the progress of CCI schools over the past two years and found major improvements in school culture and performance. As a result, the Ministry of Education, has now made character development part of the assessment of successful school performance.

The All Lights Village project, launched in Asia, is now coming to Nigeria. All Lights is pioneering a comprehensive approach to development in rural communities. It begins with bringing solar lamps to villages without electrification. But that is just the starting point for ongoing initiatives that promote the "light" of education, the empowerment of social entrepreneurial capacity-building, and an enduring commitment of community development.

We also have distinguished leaders from the political sphere here with us ready to promote moral and innovative leadership. I would like to congratulate those heads of state, former and present, who are joining together to launch the Africa Leadership Mission on Peacebuilding, Youth Leadership, and Service, here at this conference.

The Leadership Mission will engage former heads of state and research institutions and is modeled on the Latin American Presidential Mission launched last year during the Global Peace Convention at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta.

Through the power of moral and innovative leadership rooted in the unifying vision of One Family under God, Nigeria can rise above its present challenges.

Your faith leaders are already working together, in partnership with traditional leaders. Through uniting and cooperating around this powerful moral vision you can give direction and hope to the Nigerian people and hold your political leaders to account.

Nigeria's faith leaders can show how it is possible for different traditions to unite around shared principles and values to resolve conflict and secure peace. In so doing you will be creating a great benefit for Africa and for the world, by demonstrating a model that others can emulate.

If you can seize the vision of One Family under God and make it into a reality; if the rising generation of young leaders can inherit and practice this vision, then the hope for Nigeria will be bright. Your country can become a light and a true leader in the new emerging Africa, an example and inspiration for other nations to follow.

I urge you to join with me and unite together in pursuit of this great cause so that Nigeria can realize its true destiny.

Thank you and may God bless you and your families