



# NATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE

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## A CALL FOR RESTRAINT

We've recently come to the end of the holy month of Ramadan, for millions of Nigerians, a time of spirituality, introspection and the request for God's forgiveness. Therefore, there could be no better time than now as a nation for us all to be thoughtful, deliberate and make ourselves worthy of divine mercy, especially in the atmosphere of a steep rise in divisive and hateful rhetoric in our country. It is indeed, the appropriate time to underscore the imperative of peaceful co-existence of all communities and all Nigerians.

We cannot afford at this or any other time to stoke the fires of hate and divisiveness in our body politic especially when ordinary Nigerians are engaged in difficult struggles to secure their livelihood, amidst rising insecurity and increasing fear. We have lost too many of our citizens to random and diverse acts of violence, have many more maimed for life or living in displacement. Tens of thousands of children have been orphaned by conflict and millions of our fellow citizens now face threats of starvation in the face of rising food insecurity. In many parts of the country, mass killings go unpunished and unresolved, inter-communal clashes have become chronic, economic deprivations and growing social exclusion and feelings of alienation, particularly among the youths are being exploited by segments of the elite with potentially dangerous and painful consequences for us all.

These developments are sources of serious concern for the *Nigeria Peace Committee*. We know, of course that we are not alone in our worries and would like to commend the Acting President, Professor Yemi Osinbanjo, SAN, GCON, for engaging with leaders of influence across the South-East and North in a bid to check the rise of mutual hostility and tension that have been stoked by elements from parts of the country. Nonetheless, the *National Peace Committee* appeals to further voices of leadership, reason and moderation from all communities in the country to reinforce the message of the Acting President.

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In this regard, the *National Peace Committee* acknowledges that the drums of rising division also reflect the perceptions by our citizens that there is poor governance in Nigeria today. Politicians who have failed in delivering on the mandate of the electorate for better livelihoods and neighbourhoods have, instead, found common cause with advocates of division and hate. In many parts of the country, young people who have been left without means of livelihood or hope in their future have become converts to radicalisation preached by demagogues in various guises including ethnicity and religion.

At this time in Nigeria, more than ever before, we need government at all levels, which work for the people, with commitment to respect for the rule of law and to the security and well wellbeing of persons and communities in the country. We also need credible institutions, an economy that guarantees a fair deal and outcome for hardworking people, better physical infrastructures and an enabling environment in which citizens can thrive. The *National Peace Committee* therefore calls on State governments to commit to developing their own people more and relying less on Abuja to fund their consumption through monthly allocations. We also encourage the Acting President and the Federal Government to remain steadfast in the steps they are taking to reassure all communities and citizens of equal stake holding in the Nigerian project. In brief, Nigerians need an effective state that we can all call our own.

To reinforce these steps, the *National Peace Committee*:

1. Appeals that on-going efforts to reach out to leaders from various parts of the country should be broadened into honest dialogue with all segments of the Nigerian population to ensure that ordinary citizens get the opportunity to convey their views to government at the highest levels and get carried along in the formulation and implementation of government policies;
2. Underscores the need for government to urgently work with the private and voluntary sectors to put in place measures to address the crisis of skills and jobs as key vectors of radicalisation;
3. Recommends to the federal government to review, update and enforce all laws relating to citizenship in Nigeria to ensure the equality of all under the law;
4. Advises the government to consult on the possibility of examining the reports of the *Political Reforms Conference of 2005* and other National Conferences as bases for further and continuing dialogue on co-existence among communities in Nigeria;

5. Calls on politicians to deny support to or endorsement of groups that harbour or express disdain for peaceful coexistence among Nigerians;

6. Supports the position of Government on the need to ensure effective enforcement of laws that prohibit hate and divisive speeches that constitute a threat to our constitutional and collective right to live in a democracy founded on free expression.

***SIGNED:***

**General Abdusalam ABUBAKAR, GCFR, Most Rev. Matthew Hassan KUKAH**

*(Chairman, NPC)*

*(Convener, NPC)*