

# **HD Jos Forum Inter-communal Dialogue Process**

## **Joint Declaration of Commitment to Peace and Cooperation**

### **Preamble**

Over the last two decades, communities living Jos, Nigeria and its environs have witnessed a decline in the security, economy, and social fabric of the city and its environs. We, as representatives of our respective communities (Afizere, Anaguta, Berom, Fulani, Hausa, Igbo, South-South, Yoruba, and Women) in Jos North, Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas, have decided to halt the decline of our city and its surroundings. We joined hands in an inter-communal dialogue process facilitated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue with the participation of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Plateau State Government as well as Traditional and Religious leaders in the area.

Between August 2013 and June 2014, representatives of the communities (with a State Government delegation of nine officials, as well as observers from the security agencies) convened for a series of discussions on issues of mutual concern, ranging from Religious Tolerance to Security Arrangements to Indigene/Settler Identity. The challenges we discussed are not unique to Jos and are in varying degrees faced throughout Nigeria. But we believe that the solution to our problems here lies with us: the people of Jos and this region. We are determined not only to work together toward our own healing, but to present to other parts of Nigeria this positive example of non-violent conflict resolution.

Together, we present the following Joint Declaration of Commitment to Peace and Cooperation.

### **Purpose**

This declaration represents a public commitment by the signatories to:

- Respect the perspectives and concerns of other communities;
- Sincerely cooperate with other communities in the pursuit of peace;
- Acknowledge the suffering caused by repetitive violence and destruction;
- Assume responsibility for our actions and (so far as possible) the actions of our communities;
- Cooperate with Government, Traditional Authorities, and Religious Leaders to pursue and sustain peace;
- Implement the Jos Forum Recommendations.

### **Acknowledgment of Past Violence, Suffering, and Mistrust**

Since colonial times, Jos and its environs in Plateau State was a place of peaceful coexistence. More recently, the social fabric of communities living in this area has been torn apart. There has been an increase in fear, distrust, destruction of life and property, violence and suffering. We have witnessed a decline in the economy and in all forms of security. Our young people have had

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fewer opportunities to envision and develop their future. Our businesses have faced hardships and entrepreneurship has been deterred. Every community has been deeply affected by these factors, including by displacement from homes, loss of property, insult, injury and death.

As representatives of our communities, we acknowledge the immense suffering and damage caused by recurrent violence and mistrust. Further, we are deeply sorry for the suffering and damage that our communities may have contributed to and endured. This recognition of suffering is what led us to undertake the HD Jos Forum dialogue process, and it will continue to guide us in the pursuit of peace.

### **Understandings Achieved**

During the course of the dialogue sessions, we learned much about each other's fears and desires, and have come to recognize several general truths, including that:

- tolerance and respect serve as the foundation for peaceful living;
- dialogue rather than violence is the preferred means of resolving disputes; and that
- uniting around common values and ideals can achieve more progress and development than emphasising differences.

Further, we agreed that the actions of individuals should not be attributed to communities as a whole. Instead, our communities should work together to prevent wicked and criminal minded individuals and small groups from wreaking any more havoc in our city and its environs.

### **Responsibilities as Community Leaders and Members**

As far as possible, we accept responsibility for the actions of our communities, and recognize the need as community leaders, to lead by example in the pursuit of peace. We will cooperate in shaping our collective destiny. We are grateful for other assistance and support, including from Federal, State, and Local Government, as well as from internal and external partners and organizations, but this does not substitute for the responsibility we should have for one another.

To end the environment of violence and mistrust, we adopt the following points as a code of conduct for all leaders and communities, to be exemplified in all of our activities.

- To respect the peaceful traditions and customs of each other's communities consistent with the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution and other relevant codes of conduct.
- To actively engage and encourage our communities to refrain from violence; especially youth who are so often mobilized for criminal purposes or violence.
- To continue especially to emphasise the inclusion of women and youth in all of our activities.
- To encourage elected Government members and all public officials to act impartially on behalf of all communities in Plateau State.
- To encourage all political candidates and supporters, as well as religious leaders, to show tolerance and respect for all communities and to avoid inflammatory communal-based speech, policy and incitement.

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- To foster a cooperative relationship between our communities and the security forces, where appropriate and possible, in an attempt to root out individual perpetrators of violence and criminality amongst our communities.
- To work hard to implement the recommendations developed by the HD Jos Forum Inter-communal Dialogue Process

### **Commitment to Peace and Implementation**

We acknowledge that challenges remain and that setbacks may occur; but we pledge our resolve to push forward in the pursuit of peace. We, as leaders of our communities, pledge our commitment to work with relevant authorities and persons of good will for the implementation of the HD Jos Forum Recommendations and to the spirit with which they were written.

We acknowledge the State and Federal Government Commissions of Inquiry that have been previously established to investigate the causes of violent clashes in Jos and its environs and to recommend solutions. We recognize those reports, and have studied them over the course of the dialogue process. We further recognize that the lack of the full implementation of these commissions' recommendations may have contributed to the continued crises in Jos. For this reason, we do not submit this declaration of commitment casually, and understand the need for extensive follow-up.

As community representatives, we commend the attendance and active participation in the HD Jos Forum by representatives of the Federal, State, Local Governments and by the Security Agencies. We also recognize that the various levels of Government, Traditional and Religious leaders, women and youth have a unique role in overseeing the security and prosperity of Jos, of Plateau State, and of Nigeria as a whole.

We therefore request that each level of government, including all services and agencies, join us in actively healing our society and preventing future violence. Such participation and activity may take many forms, and we request that each level of government continue to engage and respond to the HD Jos Forum.

We welcome the Jos Women Steering Committee's Declaration, and commend their heroic efforts thus far. We also commend the ongoing efforts of support groups (Businesses, Inter-faith, Youth, and NGOs) and are determined to involve them in the implementation of the HD Jos Forum Recommendations.

Finally, we also commit ourselves to resolving disputes through dialogue rather than violence, and pledge to continue to use the Jos Forum as a mechanism to handle our disputes, and to bring relevant grievances before the forum. Should any issue be unresolved by the forum, a special decision can be made by the forum to take appropriate steps alongside appropriate authorities to address the issue at hand.

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#### **Presenting the Recommendations**

Beyond the general understanding agreed upon above, the HD Jos Forum developed recommendations after each dialogue session. The recommendations (presented in full in the annex) were developed to guide future action to prevent violence, address grievances, and end impunity.

- Session I: Trust Building and Religious Tolerance.
- Session II: Rebuilding Places of Worship, Burial Grounds and Issues Relating to the Youth.
- Session III: Governance Issues and Access to Public Services and Public Spaces
- Session IV: Traditional Rulership issues and renaming of places etc.
- Session V: Countryside Problems such as Land Annexations, cattle rustling, and displacement people. Deferred to a grassroots dialogue process conducted in Barkin Ladi, Jos South, and Riyom Local Government Areas.
- Session VI: Jos City Issues such as Ownership, Indigeneship and Settlers.
- Session VII & VIII: Impunity, Reparations and Compensation. Securing Lives and Property and Public Apologies.

#### **Follow-up Actions**

Implementing the recommendations developed by the HD Jos Forum will require considerable work and resources in the immediate and longer-term. We pledge our commitment to work with various actors to implement the recommendations; including: the Federal, State, and Local Governments; and civil society organisations (women, youth, business, religious, and non-governmental groups). To do this, our activities will continue under the banner of the Jos Peace Dialogue Forum, a now registered non-profit organisation, that intends to maintain its status as an impartial dialogue mechanism to be used by the communities to handle disputes in the years to come.

As a matter of urgency, the members of the Jos Peace Dialogue Forum will monitor the situation in Jos through a tension-management working group that seeks to intervene, through dialogue, in situations that can spiral into violence. The tension-management working group will be especially active ahead of the 2015 elections.

The Jos Peace Dialogue Forum will also act on matters of priority in considering ways of implementing the full list of recommendations through the various stakeholders involved; beginning with the issues of the rebuilding of places of worship, displaced persons, traditional rulership arrangements, and grassroots dialogue sessions in the countryside adjacent to Jos.