

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A THREE-DAY PEACE AND SECURITY CONFERENCE IN PLATEAU STATE WITH THE THEME: “RESURGENCE OF VIOLENT ATTACKS IN PLATEAU STATE: FORGING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE AND SECURITY” ORGANIZED BY PLATEAU PEACE BUILDING AGENCY (PPBA) IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE (USIP) AND WITH SUPPORT FROM MERCY CORPS, HELD AT CREST HOTEL, ALONG OLD AIRPORT ROAD, JOS ON JULY 30<sup>TH</sup> – 1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2018.**

**Preamble:**

Against the backdrop of the resurgence of violent attacks in some parts of Plateau state, a Three-day Peace and Security conference was organized by the Plateau State Peace Building Agency with a view to take a critical review of the Peace and security architecture of the state as well as proffer practical suggestions on how we can collectively address the emerging trend. The Peace and Security conference was organized in conjunction with the United States’ Institute of Peace and with support from the US Embassy in Nigeria and Mercy Corps on 30<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 at the Crest Hotel, along Old Airport Road Jos, Plateau state.

The theme of the conference- Resurgence of Violent Conflict in Plateau State: Forging a Multi-stakeholder Partnership for Peace is part of the broader effort of the Plateau State government through the Peace Building Agency to facilitate an open and frank discussion between stakeholders and conflict parties with a view to build a new social compact for Peace and security in Plateau state.

The highly interactive conference was structured into power point presentation, panel discussion and plenary which provided for question and answer sessions. It was also expected to suggest proactive and realistic measures that would help to reduce or mitigate the return of violent conflict in the state. Participants were drawn from relevant government Ministries,

Departments and Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Traditional institutions, religious bodies, women and youth organizations as well as the media amongst several others. After intensive deliberations, the conference came up with the following resolutions:

**Issues/Observations:**

- i. The conference unanimously condemned the resurgence of violent attacks in some communities across the state describing it as regrettable and totally unacceptable. And also commiserated with the victims of the unfortunate incidence.
- ii. It was unanimously agreed that there is gap between early warning and early response in the state and this gap was partly responsible for the resurgence of violent attacks.
- iii. It was agreed that the inability of security agencies to act professionally and to respond to early warning signs was largely responsible for the recent attacks in some parts of the state.
- iv. In addition the poor, and in some cases absence of interagency cooperation has significantly diminished the capacity of security agencies to tackle head-on the growing challenges of Peace and security in Plateau state.
- v. It was established that the security challenges in Plateau state is not limited to farmer/herder conflict. However the farmer/herder conflict presents a significant threat to peace and security in the entire state and the nation at large. Yet it would appear that there is no any concrete policy response to this problem at the state and national levels.
- vi. The Conference also commended the effort of the Executive Governor of Plateau State Rt. Hon Simon Bako Lalong towards security provisioning and urged government not to despair in the face of these renewed attacks but to explore and expand momentum for conflict prevention and Peace building in the state.
- vii. The meeting appreciated the effort of the Plateau State governor Rt. Hon Simon Bako Lalong for creating the PPBA as the foremost

- institutional framework dedicated to conflict prevention and peace building in the Country and called on the government and other relevant stakeholders to support the Agency to deliver on its mandate.
- viii. The governor's decision to set up two separate committees to ensure the safe return and resettlement of the victims of violent conflict was equally applauded.
  - ix. Participants lauded PPBA for organizing the conference stressing that the theme of the conference was apt and couldn't have come at a better time in view of the deteriorating security situation in the state.
  - x. It was observed that there is a growing suspicion and distrust between some local communities and the security agencies and this was largely as a result of unprofessional conduct of some security personnel. This development has given rise to a conspiracy of silence in most rural communities as evident in their unwillingness to volunteer information to security agencies. This has further exacerbated the already precarious situation.
  - xi. It was unanimously observed that the roles of some politicians and religious leaders have been very critical in exacerbating violent attacks across the state
  - xii. It was established that the strength of security personnel in the state is grossly inadequate to effectively provide physical security to a vast majority of the citizens and especially in the rural communities which is why they are often vulnerable to violent attacks.
  - xiii. The need to checkmate the excesses of religious leaders or clerics who use the pulpit to instigate their followers to follow the paths of violence through their sermons and unguarded utterances was also stressed.
  - xiv. Unemployment was identified as one of the push factors for youth engagement in violence hence the need for government and other non-state actors to create opportunities for youth to be gainfully employed.

- xv. It was also noted that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a motivating factor to the culture of violence. Hence the need for relevant agencies of government to check the menace.
- xvi. Participants resolved that the practice by the Police of transferring arrested cases of people caught with weapons or alleged to have carried out violent attacks in Plateau State to Abuja for further investigation should be stopped and such investigations be carried out within the state. This is one of the reasons that creates distrust and suspicion that drags the neutrality of security agencies into question.
- xvii. The social media was also identified as a critical factor that instigates violence in view of the fake news it propagates as well as hateful and inflammatory speech. Hence the general public is called upon to minimize their level of dependence on the social media information without investigation.
- xviii. It was also established that hateful and inflammatory speeches especially in the social media is a growing trend that poses a serious threat to peace and security in the state.
- xix. It was observed that women have significant role in conflict prevention and peace building considering their strategic place in the family as custodians of the children who often become agents and means of violence. It was also noted that traditionally women have no role in decision making processes but this has however significantly shifted and there is the need to increase the stake of women in decision making processes.

After frank and exhaustive deliberations on a wide-range of issues, the following resolutions were unanimously reached:

- i. The conference observed that although traditionally, the protection of lives and properties is the responsibility of government, however, in view of the complex nature of emerging threats to social stability in

- contemporary times, government alone is practically unable to effectively deliver on the promise of peace and security to a vast majority of its citizenry. This would require the collaborative support of relevant stakeholders at all level. However, government has a responsibility to create the enabling environment for people to live in peace while the people drive and own the peace process.
- ii. It was also agreed on the need to build interagency cooperation among security agencies as the lack of it exacts a massive toll on the efforts of government and other relevant stakeholders to mitigate the risk of violence particularly in communities that are prone to attacks.
  - iii. The conference endorsed the Roadmap to Peace document and called on governments at all levels as well as other relevant stakeholders to give the implementation of the document the necessary support it deserves.
  - iv. The conference unanimously called on the state government to demonstrate the political will to implement viable recommendations of some white papers and reports of past commissions of inquiry into violent conflicts in the state. As this would add value to the peace process in the state.
  - v. That there is the need for the state government to muster the political will to checkmate rampant cases of impunity and the weaknesses in retributive justice with regards to crimes and criminalities as this will greatly serve deterrence and also curtail reprisal attacks.
  - vi. The conference unanimously agreed that traditional rulers are critical stakeholders in the peace process and also made a strong advocacy on the need to give constitutional roles to traditional rulers as this would go a long way in dealing with some of the security challenges in their domains.
  - vii. The conference called on politicians and other conflict merchants who are fond of using the youth as agents and means of violence in furtherance of parochial interests to desist from such unpatriotic acts.

- viii. That building a stable society in modern era is a collective task; as such the efforts of relevant stakeholders should be synergized and channeled towards developing practical strategies that can further complement the efforts of government to deliver on the promise of peace and security to its teeming population.
- ix. The meeting also appreciated the significant role and contributions of non-state actors such as the CSOs, religious bodies, cultural associations and security agencies in the peace process in Plateau state.
- x. That the inability of state governors to have direct control over security agencies has grossly undermined their role as chief security officer at the state level. Therefore state governments should be allowed to create state police which should be placed under the direct control of state governors in order to further enhance their capacity to protect lives and properties of their people.
- xi. That hateful and inflammatory speech particularly in the social media exacerbates other issues of conflict. As such there is the needs for all and sundry especially the youths to be properly sensitized on the danger of the negative use of the social media.
- xii. That the Federal and State governments should strengthen the operational capacity of all existing security outfits in the state to be more proactive in carrying out their statutory duties.
- xiii. Although the social media is an unregulated platforms, there is the need for the Nigerian government to explore possible ways of regulating these excesses with the owners of these platforms. Doing this could be strategic considering the millions of Nigerians subscribing on these platforms would be a good bargain.
- xiv. The meeting also implored the Governor to remain steadfast in the face of the deteriorating security situation by providing quality leadership that is just and fair to all regardless of ethnic and religious considerations.
- xv. The need to integrate the Peace building agency into the state security council given the technical and professional advise they can

- offer in the collection and analysis of intelligence relevant to conflict prevention and Peace building.
- xvi. The importance of integrating women into critical decision making processes in the context of conflict prevention and peace building efforts of government.

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