

**Conscience Based Leadership: The Secret to Global Peace  
and Security**

**A Presentation by Dr. Goodluck E. Jonathan, (President of Nigeria  
2010-2015) at the International Summit on Peace organized by JCI  
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Protocols

**1. Introduction**

It is my pleasure and a great honour to be invited to give the keynote speech at this very important Peace Summit organised by Junior Chamber International (JCI), holding here in Kuching.

First, I have to say that I am encouraged by the successes recorded by your organisation in galvanising young people around the world for good causes and promoting peace on our planet. I believe that if more societies and organisations would join JCI in this crusade for global peace, the world will be a better place for all of us.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the entire people of Malaysia and the good people and Government of Sarawak for the rare hospitality they have put on display during this conference. You have indeed proved that Kuching is a **City of Unity** and place of generosity.

I must say that when I was first informed of this invitation, my initial reaction was, 'why me?'

As an organization of dynamic young global citizens aiming to positively impact our world, I had expected that JCI would be seeking the attention of a youthful serving leader, to inspire the world's young, at an important Summit as this.

But then I took a second look at your theme and consoled myself that even as a former President and a much older person, I may not, after all, be an unsuitable choice. This is because both the young and the old have key roles to play, in matters of leadership and peace.

This consideration also reminded me of a statement by one of Nigeria's elder statesmen and sage, Alhaji Maitama Sule, who died just two months ago. He once said: "The young breed without the old breed will breed greed." I believe, in saying so, he meant that the young and old must come together for a better tomorrow.

The general theme for this Summit is '**Peace is Possible**' under which I am required to focus on **Leadership for a Peaceful World**. For emphasis, I will present my paper under the following heading: '**Conscience Based Leadership: The Secret to Global Peace and Security.**' This is consistent with my belief that the conscience and integrity of leaders are germane to solving societal problems.

First, let us examine the interplay of the driving words; **leadership, conscience, and peace.**

## **2. Leadership**

Again, I commend JCI for the initiative of this discourse which is centered around critically examining the role leadership plays in ensuring peace in a community. Such exercise is crucial in the life of any group or organization. For us as members of the human society, constant interrogation of the character of leadership is essential in removing the existential threat, its poor application poses to our world.

Each time I think about leadership and how important it is in our lives, I always remember a quote attributed to Alexander the Great, King of the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedon. He said: "I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion."

This is a powerful epigram that has however been interpreted variously overtime, to suit diverse dispositions and ends. As a democrat who believe in building strong institutions, rather than strong men, I don't completely agree with the author. But I see his submission as speaking to a particular perception of leadership which we need to further interrogate. It is the view that leadership holds a commanding influence in the affairs of men, and that our fate is intertwined with that of our leaders.

Over the years, the term leadership has evolved and in its evolution, many people now see a title or an office as leadership. But that is an erroneous outlook on leadership. The best leader does not borrow power from his office or position. Rather, he adds influence to his office or position.

I admire your internal notion of leadership at JCI, especially the "One Year to Lead" philosophy which you have espoused. This tends to concisely capture the attributes that support and sustain peace in our societies.

In my view, this your philosophy teaches two critical lessons in leadership:

- 1) Leadership as the embodiment of a distinct aptitude that leads to answers to societal questions, and provides the optimism that keeps communities on track.
- 2) It is equally that structured game which every driven and spirited individual, out to make a difference in the lives of the people, gets an opportunity to play, **in line with the rules.**

I highlighted the last five words above because of the threat and catastrophe that often follow the decision by some leaders to either disobey or change the rules, especially those involving scope and tenure.

### **3. Conscience**

Conscience aggregates an individual's moral sense of right and wrong which in turn directs his behaviour. In governance, leaders are faced with the same choices, and that is how conscience rules our world, for good or bad.

Another compatriot, an Islamic cleric, and writer, Usman Dan Fodio, who was born in the 18th Century and died in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century portrayed conscience in a very remarkable way. He said: "Conscience is an open wound, only truth can heal it". What this tells me is that truth is the guiding light in all human interactions, including governance. It tells me also that it is the balm that heals the conscience of every leader and directs him to do right. Without truth, the conscience of a leader will no longer heal, but bruise the people.

The best leadership flows from inspiration and not from power or force of arms. You can only inspire people when your leadership is governed by your conscience and the support of the led.

Power centric leadership is ego based. Looking at human history in the last 100 years, you would notice that ego based leadership has brought untold hardship to humanity and set us back decades. On the contrary, conscience based leadership has again and again,

been shown to be the only type of leadership that can engender world peace, progress and unity.

Adolph Hitler was an ego based leader. He commanded a large army, and was also an intelligent leader. But because he was not governed by conscience, everything he built came crashing down and his name will forever go down in history as an anathema.

On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi, while leading the cause for India's independence, did not command troops. But he easily galvanized his people's support and liberated vast India from colonialism with his conscience, civility and power of his conviction.

Ditto for Dr Martin Luther King Jr, whose son I met last year in Atlanta, United States. Dr King was a man that did not command a single armed man. He was not the political head of any community. His word was not law. He could not dictate his wishes but he inspired a nation with his conscientious speeches.

Despite not controlling the instruments of government or the media, Dr King's 'I Have a Dream' speech remains one of the most famous speeches of the 20th century. Though he did not hold a political office or control great wealth, he was able to inspire a nation to unite and discard segregation and racism and mobilize together toward the ideals of their Founding Fathers.

But what is the difference between Adolph Hitler, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr? They were all charismatic, disciplined, driven and highly intelligent to the point of genius.

The difference between them was not in their genes which were Caucasian, Asian and African-American. No. If that was the only difference that mattered, then we would not have had bloodthirsty tyrants in Africa and Asia.

The difference between them is that both Dr Martin Luther King Jr, and Mahatma Gandhi were led by conscience while Adolph Hitler was led by ego. **Conscience builds, ego destroys.**

#### **4. Peace**

When we narrowly consider peace as the absence of conflict and freedom from violence, we tend to forget that peace is actually the end result of responsible leadership.

The United Nations has done a good job by reminding us that more than expressing a state of being, which is the absence of conflicts; peace means dignity and well-being for all.

The immediate past Secretary-General of the UN Mr. Ban Ki-moon captured this succinctly in 2014 when he said: "Peace means access

to education, health, essential services which ... must be nurtured through the dignity, rights and capacities of every man and woman.”

Similarly, the African Union has devised mechanisms for promoting peace, security and stability on the continent by focusing on measures that address such issues as widespread poverty, youth unemployment, poor governance, illiteracy and lack of free and fair elections.

Every person on earth is entitled to the right of peaceful co-existence with others. Unfortunately, peace building has become one of the greatest challenges facing our world today. There is no part of the world that is completely at peace or immune from crises or violent conflicts.

The world is not lacking in peace initiatives which can be found in all corners of the earth. Yet, the challenge of conflicts, wars and terror continue to visit violence, grief and poverty on human populations.

## **5. A Bird's-Eye View on Causes of Global Conflicts**

If leaders were to match their words with action in meeting their obligation to the people, there is no doubt that we will be moving closer to the peaceful world we all dream of. But how can we attain that state when those dictatorial traits including ego, authoritarianism, supremacy battle, fight for territories and the tendency to distort

existing order, which threaten global peace and cause wars, are still very much with us?

A recent report on Global Peace Index released by the Institute for Economics and Peace showed that the economic impact of conflict, in 2016 alone stood at \$14.3 trillion which translates to about 12.6% of world GDP.

The research also indicated that “the world continues to spend enormous resources on creating and containing violence but very little on peace.” If anything, this colossal effort which is directed at fighting already lit fires, should tell us where to place our priorities. That would be concentrating on those deliveries that make our people human, keep them safe and cater to their happiness, rather than spending so much, just to show our might.

## **6. The Nature of Conflicts in Africa**

In Africa, where I come from, the causes of conflict had mostly been traced to weak institutions, poor democratic practices and political instability.

On a different level, the struggle for power by African politicians had, more often than not, unleashed widespread violence in their countries which robbed those nations of the stability and peace needed for sustainable development and economic growth.

Even in cases without manifest violence, politicians often undermined democratic principles, emasculated people power and placed themselves above the electorates. In that situation the views of the people, who wield sovereignty with their votes, no longer counted as they should. And once the people lose their right to truly elect their leaders, accountability, which brings about good governance, becomes the first victim.

But the good news is that the situation is no longer that bad. Democracy is already being consolidated on the continent of Africa, with good success stories. From Cape to Cairo, and the Gulf to the Horn of Africa, elections are being conducted by many African nations in peaceful and transparent manner.

## **7. Development and Peace**

There is a clear correlation between a nation's social and economic standing and its position in the global conflict index. That is why richer nations, with better human development profiles experience fewer crimes, violence and conflicts than the poorer ones.

Around the world, nations with the highest progress on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) are those with good education, free press and functional democracy. In the top ten category are Norway, Australia, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands,

Germany, Ireland, the USA, Canada and New Zealand. All these nations have high education standards, a vibrant democracy with an unstifled opposition, genuine separation of powers and a free press.

Meanwhile, the nations with the lowest progress on the United Nations HDI are those ones either experiencing full blown dictatorship or nations that have placed democracy under threat. In the bottom 10 are nations we all know, with many of them in Africa, either currently in conflict, or just getting out of it.

## **8. My Approach**

Since you specifically invited me to share my experience as a political leader and President, with the forum, I will, therefore, like to mention some of the things I did in office, to build a peaceful society.

I can confidently say that in all my public life, I was inspired to lead by conscience. This is in agreement with my personal philosophy which I first proclaimed while running for the office of the Governor of my home state Bayelsa in 2006, and re-echoed when I ran for the office of the President of Nigeria in 2011 and 2015.

Then, I made it clear that **my political ambition is not worth the blood of anybody.**

Ever since I said that in November of 2006 in Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa State, I have always lived by it. This philosophy informed my

decision to concede the 2015 Presidential election, even while the results were still being collated.

### **8:1 - Strides in Education**

Let me give an example of one way I was inspired to lead by my conscience. In Nigeria, there were 10.5 million (about 15% of the population) out of school children who were of school age, going by UNICEF figures, as at the time I became President. This was a disproportionate portion for my country which was quite alarming, considering that many other developing nations with much higher population had fewer numbers of out of school children.

Over 80% of these children for which majority are known as *Almajiri* came from the northern part of Nigeria, where I recorded the least votes in the elections I contested. Knowing the value of education, I could see that the ugly situation was limiting the opportunities of these children and negatively affecting the development of my country. That was why my administration decided to build 165 **Almajiri Integrated Model Schools** which combined both western and Islamic education in its curricula. They were designed to have significant impact in reducing the number of out of school children, and opening the space for them to dream like other kids in other parts of the nation.

Constitutionally, the Federal Government which I led was not obligated to build primary and secondary schools. It is the

responsibility of the states and local governments. But I believed that without providing education to these children, the country would be fated to spend more money in fighting insecurity.

My administration took education seriously because I saw education as the weapon with which we could break the bond between illiteracy and crime levels. For instance, it was obvious that Boko Haram terrorists were exploiting these innocent children in the northern part of the country and using them as cannon fodders to destabilize the country. The situation was so awful that security reports indicated that even parents were alleged to be giving out their innocent and illiterate children to terrorists for suicide bombing.

I am a firm believer in education, and just as I had said elsewhere, any nation that does not spend its wealth in educating its youth will eventually spend that wealth to fight insecurity.

With my one and half years stay as the governor of my State, Bayelsa, one of the remarkable things I tried to do then was to upgrade and improve infrastructure in our educational institutions in my determination to encourage more children to go to school, and stop them from taking to crimes.

I also revived the award of post primary school scholarship to bright students from mainly the rural communities and sent them to the best

secondary schools in Nigeria. I introduced a concept of building two specialized post-primary institutions as centres of excellence for gifted and talented students. My aim was to build role models who will inspire others in all the nooks and crannies of the state.

I believed that one of the most effective ways of discouraging restiveness and other crimes that are prevalent in the Niger Delta, Nigeria's seat of oil exploration, was to build role models to give hope to other disenchanting youths. The whole idea was using education to solve social and security problems in my country.

When I eventually became President, I thought it was time to mainstream this programme to the centre, by expanding the opportunities for qualitative education at all levels, to every hard-working Nigerian youth.

Throughout the time I was in office, education enjoyed the highest sectoral allocation in the nation's budget. This was why we were able to scale up our education programmes, especially at the tertiary level, where there was an obvious need to address the challenge of insufficient spaces for our youths. We built 12 additional conventional universities and two more specialised institutions including one maritime university and a police university. With that, we expanded the opportunities to educate our youth in relevant fields, and produce the manpower needs of our economy.

For a nation to truly develop, it must cultivate a crop of manpower that could revolutionise its technological advancement. For this reason, we introduced the **Presidential Special Scholarship Scheme for Innovation and Development (PRESSID)**. With this programme, we offered scholarship to the best of our first-class graduates from the technical disciplines, to embark on further studies in the world's leading universities. The idea was to send them to these institutions to acquire technical skills that are relevant to our development goals.

To reduce tension and conflict in the Niger Delta, we equally implemented a programme for the training of the youths in different disciplines, skills and technical vocations relevant to our economy, in many local and foreign institutions.

## **8:2 - Economic Empowerment and Job Creation**

Nigeria's population estimate in 2011 when I became President was put at about 163 million. More than 60% of this number was made up of young people. For a country with such huge population and faced with obvious youth bulge, we considered that Government must be resourceful in creating opportunities for employment. To make progress, we came up with innovative programmes, including the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), which

encouraged young people to establish their own businesses, create jobs and stay away from crimes.

YOUWIN proved to have been quite successful in promoting entrepreneurship among youth and women. The process involved recruiting thousands of awardees with realistic business proposals who were then given take-off grants, trained and attached to successful business people for proper guidance. Most of them ended up establishing flourishing enterprises that generated more than 27,000 jobs in its first two years.

A World Bank-funded study, led by senior economist David McKenzie compared YOUWIN to similar programmes in many countries and stated that it performed better than most of them. Part of the report said: "This programme would be more effective at creating jobs than the fiscal stimulus in the United States...The cost per job created also compares favourably to many job creation policy efforts in developing countries, which have struggled to find significant effects on employment."

The World Bank was so impressed by YOUWIN's success in creating thousands of entrepreneurs and generating jobs that it is now encouraging its replication in other countries.

AN Oxford University scholar James Burton who recently conducted a research on the success of YOUWIN programme also concluded that it outperformed programmes specifically targeted at employment

generation in other countries, and encouraged other African nations to emulate it.

Burton further said: "YOUWIN was two and a halftimes as efficient as a 2013 management consulting program in Mexico, four and a halftimes as efficient as a 2014 wage subsidy program in Jordan and almost ten times as efficient as a 2011 vocational training program in Turkey."

Related to this was our agricultural transformation agenda which quickly transformed the agricultural sector and boosted local food production and food security.

We achieved that through establishing a fresh paradigm in farming, by cultivating a new generation of young and proud commercial farmers and agriculture entrepreneurs we preferred to identify as 'Nagropreneurs'. The programme, became so attractive to young university graduates, that it encouraged many of them to go into large scale commercial farming. By the time I left office in 2015, over 100,000 youths, had benefited in one way or the other from this initiative.

My administration also supported the technological drive of our youths by creating the environment for the setting up of two vibrant ICT incubation centres in Lagos and Calabar. Many of you may recall that Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg chose to visit Lagos as his first stop during his recent and only visit to Africa. His main attraction

was the Lagos software centre, the Co-Creation Hub (CC Hub) which has become quite successful, because it has produced many thriving start-ups.

Nigeria's vibrant film industry is also an area that bears the stamp of my Government's massive support to our enterprising youths. The local film industry known as Nollywood, has grown phenomenally within a very short time, to become the third largest in the world, behind America's Hollywood and India's Bollywood. That impressive record became possible because of my Government's support and grants to the budding film industry.

It was as a result of this support that Nollywood was able to rapidly boost its capacity to the extent that by 2014, it contributed 4% to Nigeria's GDP. It was the first time the industry would feature as a factor in Nigeria's economic growth and national GDP computation.

We were able to implement these innovative programmes because my administration made youth entrepreneurship the plank of our policies.

In peace building you cannot underestimate the role of women, who, on the average, make up half of the population of most societies. As President, I encouraged plurality and gender balance by mainstreaming women into Nigerian politics and public service. I ensured that more than 30 percent of the positions in my Government

were occupied by women. It was the first time in our country that women would attain that level of prominence in governance.

To encourage more women to go into business, the YouWin programme also had a special cycle for women only.

My idea was that a group that makes up to 50% of our population cannot be ignored. If we truly desire to develop, grow and take care of our social problems, we must empower women to be able to narrow the space for conflicts.

Even out of office, I remain committed to mentoring young people and women to start their own businesses. This is one key area of the work of my foundation, the **Goodluck Jonathan Foundation**, which is also focusing on fostering transparent elections and peaceful power transfer in Africa.

### **8: 3 - Promoting Democracy and Good Governance**

My interest in free and fair elections and peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another is borne out of the experience of instability and poor democratic practice in Africa.

One of the key ways to instill the culture of sustainable development is to improve the quality of governance. An important step in this quest is to sanitise and strengthen the electoral processes.

I strived as a key political figure to consolidate peace and cultivate democracy not only in Nigeria but across the Continent of Africa. Supporting democracy became a key focus of my administration's foreign policy objective, such that we devoted much effort to brokering peace and restoring democracy in many West African countries including Niger, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.

My administration identified the electoral process as Africa's own Augean stables that needed redemption. In our case, I appointed very competent people who had no personal relationship with me, to serve in my country's electoral commission. My Government ensured that the autonomy of the commission was guaranteed. To avoid excuses, we also made sure that the commission was fully funded.

The result was that my administration conducted the 2011 and the 2015 general elections, and all other polls without my interference.

#### **8:4 - Free Press and 2014 National Conference**

As I said earlier, it is not only when weapons are deployed that nations could be said to be in conflict. Many nations are in conflict today even when cannons do not boom and guns are not being fired.

Two key things we did to calm nerves and defuse tension in Nigeria were to ensure a free press and to convoke a national conference. In May 2011, my administration signed into law the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in order to accord the media the abiding freedom required for its watchdog duty, as well as give the people unrestricted access to information on the activities of Government.

The development expanded the space for healthy interactions and deepened citizens' freedom to express their opinions on any issue; thereby reinforcing their place as important partners in the way they were being governed.

The 2014 National Conference brought together about 500 Nigerians from all walks of life to deliberate over a five-month period and come up with recommendations on how best to run our federation, and guarantee a better future for our country.

The conference gave both the young and old the opportunity to exhaustively discuss and agree on the issues that agitated their minds on the workability of Nigeria's federal structure. I believe the recommendations of this confab, if implemented, would go a long way in solving Nigeria's structural problems. These and other steps we took, helped bring down tension, promoted national cohesion and gave Nigerians hope for a better tomorrow.

## **9. Conclusion**

In closing, I must point out that in as much as we desire peace, we have no choice but to admit that crises and conflicts are part of human society. So long as people exist on earth, so long as they remain adherents of different faiths, and the foraging for food and man's other basic needs do not cease, there will always be conflicts.

What matters then is our approach to resolving the conflicts as they arise, and ensuring that they are not allowed to snowball into bloody clashes and wars.

We now live in a world that has become more integrated, where physical borders are becoming less and less restrictive, especially within regional formations. The positive effect of this development is that travel and trade across boundaries are becoming easier and more fulfilling. But so is the ease with which transgressions like drug trafficking, crimes, conflicts, terrorism and arms and ammunitions cross national boundaries.

I had made the point that giving our youth the right education, providing job opportunities and business skills will help the world become more secure and peaceful.

But beyond that, nations can significantly reduce conflicts through limitations placed on arms. World leaders on both sides of the divide,

the side of the manufacturers and that of the flashpoints, should genuinely collaborate to ensure that action is expedited on the ratification of the United Nations' Arms Trade Treaty, (ATT) to enable it to come into full force.

There is no gainsaying the fact that uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons had been responsible for the sustenance of major conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world.

Let me reiterate, therefore, that there is no better way of achieving global peace and security than submitting ourselves, as individuals, young people, political leaders, organisations and other members of the human race, to the dictates of our good consciences. That way, we will be able to build the world that is close to our dreams, and restore the dignity which God Almighty has given to man as the master of His creation.

I thank you all.