

Welcome Address titled *"The Dream Comes Through"*
On the Occasion of the Official Inauguration of Peace Advocates and Practitioners
Organisation Nigeria European Headquarters Austria (PAPONEHA) on
Saturday, 19.10.2024 in Vienna Austria, By the President and European Coordinator
Mag. Phil. Dr. Phil. Samuel Ogbonna, PhD.

Preambles/Salutations/ Acknowledgements and Recognitions

Greetings Your Excellency from the Embassy of Nigeria in Vienna Austria, Minister Dr. Dogondaji Haliru Bello the Charge de Affairs, represented by the Minister of Councilors Ms. Ejim. I salute the representative from the United Nations with us this afternoon. Thank you for accepting our invitation to speak at this special event in the lives of Africans particularly Nigerians in Austria.

It is an honour to welcome invitees from Nigeria, Lady Dr. Chinedu Brown who is physically not available at this occasion. She will be represented by *the First Lady of the Igbo Cultural Society Austria Ms. Chinwe Egwuibe* who has agreed to present Lady Dr. Brown's Paper at this event.

Beyond that, join me in welcoming my good friend and brother Univ. – Professor Paul Uche J. Mbakwe, the great thinker and motivator, a refined academician and a heavyweight in his area of specialisation. The head of the Department of History and International Relations at the Abia State University Uturu, (ABSU) Nigeria among several academic positions he holds.

He is the founder of PAPO Nigeria DG/ Chairman Board of Trustees (BoT) Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organisation (PAPO/PAPONEHA) worldwide.

Besides, these great speakers, professionals and academicians in their various disciplines, let me recognise the presence of Mag. Dr. Jude Okonkwu, the President of the National Association of Nigeria Community in Austria. Mr. Anthony Egwuibe, Chairman of Igbo Cultural Society Austria as well as other leaders of the various Communities in Vienna. I thank you all for coming.

Besides, let me mention a few other personalities in the Community. These are the superstars of the occasion. These personalities committed themselves in various manners that we gathered here today to inaugurate and celebrate the birth of a new direction of life-saving Institution for us, our children and generations unborn. This is true given that we have come to stay, live and die in Austria. This is a hard truth. Therefore, we need an International NGO that will take the responsibility to leverage all other efforts from the host country to ensure absolute peace and freedom for us as *Black Race* to strife and to survive. That is one of the reasons why this Organisation (PAPONEHA) was established. Let me acknowledge these personalities:

Ing. John Okeke, Mr Patrick Onuh, Mr Alexo Paul and Mr Chinedu Ibeji. Others are Mrs Catherine Ogbonna, Mag. Dominic Aghaizu, Mr. Chuks Okeke and AKARAKA Restaurant, Café & Bar to mention a few. Then we have the custodians of Peace Makers according to African traditions, the likes of Chief Wise Ibe and High Chief

Emmanuel Njikonye. There are however, other facilitators I cannot mention their names here, but I thank you too.

Further than that, I welcome colleagues from the Media who without much conviction accepted our invitation to cover this event. Thank you so much.

Also, I say greetings ladies and gentlemen. It is an inspiration for me to see so many participants who have left everything they must have planned today and their loved ones to come and witness this remarkable event.

Moreover, it is a privilege to address every one of you on this occasion. Under that, I stand before you with every humility in my position as the President and Coordinator of the European Headquarters of Peace Advocate and Practitioners Organisation Nigeria with its head office in Vienna, Austria to say welcome to this all-important event in our lives and the lives of Africans in Austria.

Introduction

For the first time in the history of Nigerians and many African residents in Austria, we decided once again to get out with all sorts of cultural events to do something that is more valued in the geopolitical dimensions in the Continent of Europe. What is that? It is something in the academic field. We all know that education is the bedrock of everything in life. Statistics have shown that countries with high levels of educated citizens are more resilient or less prone to all kinds of human challenges in times of danger. The best you can give to someone is to get him or her support to gain a refined education. The rest he or she can do it alone.

We have gathered here today to officially inaugurate and celebrate the establishment of *Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organisation Nigeria European Headquarters Austria (PAPONEHA)*.

How did this get started? The journey started on Sunday the 26th of June 2023, when I drove down from Aba to Umuahia a distance of about 40km to 50km to meet with Prof. Paul Mbakwe. I planned to meet him at a Subway Restaurant, but he rejected my offer and asked me to go with him to his home. On reaching his home, little did I know that the family had heavily prepared for me. He received me with an open heart and stretched his hand to me and I received it in the same manner. We ate, drank, wine and had down-to-earth academic deliberations among other areas. It turned out that Prof. Paul Mbakwe is with the Department of History and International Relations the areas he specialised and with studies in Peace and Conflict issues, while I am a scholar of Political Science with a specialisation in International Politics and International Relations with a major in International Migration and Refugee and a Professional Diplom in Conflict Management and Mediation. The rest is a story.

Measures Undertaken Towards the Realisation of PAPO-NEHA

On Saturday, the 25th of November 2023, I called the first Leadership Consultations Summit with overwhelming enthusiastic support. In January 2024, the application for the establishment of PAPONEHA was granted. Also in March, the second Summit was conducted with more participants, followed by a series of other meetings. And in June 2024 the first election was successfully conducted.

Meanwhile, within one year *Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organisation Nigeria* is registered in Austria and here we are today to officially launch and bless this Organisation- PAPONEHA.

What We Stand For

But what do we intend to do or achieve with this Peace Organisation? Judging from the various conflicts around the globe today for instance, in Sudan in Africa, in the Middle East. The Hamas and Israel, the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israel and the Iran case and down to Europe between Russia and Ukraine, no one has any doubt that the quest for peace is now more needed than ever. The vision is to put in place a peace organisation that will among others,

- ✓ cater to and manage individual cases, partnership or group conflicts, but also cases of misunderstanding and conflicts from local, regional or state level up to national and across-the-border conflicts,
- ✓ establish exchange programmes with Austrian Universities and other Institutions with their Nigeria Counterparts: This will be an opportunity to liaise in practical forms with individuals and scholars with rich experience in peace studies and learn from one another and each other to improve understanding between Africa, Austria and Europe,
- ✓ to do our best to continue the establishment of the branches of this Peace Organization in other European Countries. In my capacity as the European Coordinator, I am not promising anything but I am saying that we shall do that. With people of the same mind, and the same ideology, to spread peace across the four corners of the world and thereby save humanity,
- ✓ on Saturday, 28.09.2024, I was at work and was going down memory lane of what we shall do or even achieve in the long run with PAPONEHA. It was exactly at 10:15 am. All of a sudden, I heard a voice said *PAPONEHA - CENTRE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE STUDIES. (CAIFPS)*

The establishment of the PAPONEHA – Center Africa Institute for Peace Studies in Austria will help us not only to learn but also to study alongside Austrians and how they have managed peace and the challenges thereabout after the Second World War till date. And we may eventually export these great ideologies and achievements to Africa, especially Nigeria.

Appeal to the Participants

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my colleagues from the Media, I call on you to help us propagate this unique International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) wherever you are and in your professional engagements. I remember vividly that on Saturday, the 25th of November 2023, I first called a leadership consultation geared towards the establishment of this NGO for instance, I told the participants to support it. I quoted one of the telephone discussions I had with the Chairman Board of Trustees and Founder of the mother Organisation PAPO “*As I write my students this morning, I told them to support a good course even if it is not from them*” by Prof. Paul Uche Mbakwe. I then begged them to support this vision and they did. That has made it possible to get together here today. In the

same way, good people of Austrians, friends and others, I stand before you to appeal to every one of you to support this Organisation.

Conclusion

Having said that, I thank every member and a host of others, who have made some unprecedented sacrifices, be it financially, materially, otherwise or even in terms of giving out their precious and expensive time for constructive summits and meetings we had before now. All these individuals and organisations have contributed in no small measure to the realisation of the dream. Thank you also to the colleagues in the Management Team for the work well done.

Univ.-Professor Paul J.U Mbakwe, you are an academic juggernaut, the best among the best. A man with outstanding academic prowess and unprecedented qualities in healing community disputes and among others. A fast guy who applies perseverance in any opportunity that comes his way. A man who loves success and imparts the same to others. A man with romantic approaches while pursuing his target, influencing and motivating people to move mountains to justify the end. A tactician in human relations and public engagements, very eloquent and assiduous in pursuit of a good result in whatever he does.

My very good friend, Professor Paul J. Uche Mbakwe, I am not mesmerizing you, nor do I intend to flabbergast you, but I am eager and cannot wait to see you perform the final inauguration, and launch this organisation with your blessings.

At this juncture, I invite you, participants, to enjoy the presentation of papers on diverse peace connotations from eminent speakers.

Thank you all for listening. *THE DREAM HAS COME THROUGH!*

Finally, I hereby declare the event open.

Mag. Dr. Samuel Ogbonna
Proponent/ President & European Coordinator.