

PEACE BEGINS WITH ME, PEACE BEGINS WITH YOU
A discussion by Lady Dr Chinedu Brown at The Occasion of the Official
Inauguration of the Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organisation Nigeria
European Headquarters Austria, Saturday, 19th October 2024
Vienna Austria. Central Europe

INTRODUCTION.

Ordinarily, when we think of peace, we envision serenity, a calm environment, an absence of violence or war. In some thoughts, peace is not simply the absence of war but is understood as a kind of well-being that is described by a word that carries within its meaning all that makes for wholeness, and prosperity- a state of justice, harmony, and mutual well-being. An esteemed author once wrote, 'Peace is never simply the absence of war. It is the active presence of justice. It has within it fulfilment, liberation, wholeness, a meaningful life, and well-being not only for the individual but for the community as a whole. The concept of peace is universally desired and close to the heart of all compassionate human beings. This is why our topic is aptly titled **'Peace begins with me, Peace begins with you'** The whole essence of peace flows out from the centre of peace in me to merge with the peace flowing out from the centre of peace within you to create a home, a community, a workplace a nation that is at peace.

It is based on this concept and understanding of peace, that a group of men and women cutting across all ages, all professions, and all faiths, as peace-centred individuals, came together to seek, to encourage, to advocate, to create more awareness of the centre in a nation where peace appears to be an illusion. This is the story of the birth of Peace Advocates and Practitioners Organisation, PAPO. I must at this point salute the doggedness of the Founder of PAPO, Prof Paul Uche Mbakwe who worked tirelessly to search out like minds and do all that it took to fully establish this Organisation. And he is still working to ensure that PAPO achieves its *raison d'etre*

UNDERSTANDING PEACE

To better understand the concept of peace as a prelude to working to achieve peace globally, various organizations have researched to examine the things that make for Peace and to identify those things that are ingredients that help build peace. One such organization is the Institute for Economics and Peace. IEP is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to viewing peace as a positive and tangible measure of human well-being and progress, not just the absence of war and violence. Peace is noted also as having two dimensions- nonviolence (negative peace) and harmony (positive peace). This shift in understanding peace led to the IEP identifying what is globally accepted and known as the 8 pillars of Positive peace:

- Well-functioning government
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Free flow of information
- Good relations with Neighbours
- High level of human capital
- Acceptance of the rights of others
- Low level of corruption
- Sound business environment

How does it feel like to live in the 3rd most peaceful country in the world? According to the Global Peace Index GPI developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace IEP, Austria ranks as the 3rd most peaceful country out of 163 countries in the analysis.

I am sure those of you living in Austria can comfortably relate to these 8 pillars as you appreciate why she is ranked the 3rd most peaceful country in the world. This is the reason PAPO chose Austria as its international Centre, to learn in practical terms how to achieve such a status. And since Peace begins with you, we believe you will assist in developing programs drawing from your environment that can aid us back home. It is also our expectation that there will be extensive exchange programs to share knowledge and experience.

We look forward to seeing you start and support value orientation programs targeting the youth within our communities, and our environment to help them understand what is expected of them under each pillar.

It would have been my joy, to personally interact and share with you moments of introspection from where each of us would arise deciding, regarding our environment, which pillars of Positive Peace to make our goal and how to, as individuals or groups set out on the mission to attain the goal. Remember that Martín Luther King Jr. said 'Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal'. Peace is said to be a process and a system, not a product and a result and so requires commitment, and dedication to a vision.

Permit me to respectfully say that it is not enough that you sit back here and enjoy the peace provided by the world's 3rd most peaceful country. Have you ever asked yourself how did they get there? What are you contributing here to keep it so? And what can you, we, copy from here to take back home to a country that on the Global Peace Index ranks 147 out of 163?

Ndi Nne anyi alola Ahia, nke gi osokwa ha lo?

Time to think. Time to remember that according to Socrates an unexamined life is a life not worth living. Time to remember that we are saying that Peace begins with me,

Peace begins with you and for the world to have peace, the individuals who inhabit the world must find peace in themselves. Time to ask ourselves:

- What have I done so far to contribute to peacebuilding wherever I find myself,
- What can I do to contribute to positive peace in my environment,
- What do I want to do to achieve positive peace wherever I can and
- What can I do to help bring my country up in the scale of the GPI?

These questions are country-specific, so using the 8 pillars as a measurement guide, where does your country stand on a scale of 1-10, so you can decide where to help? But remember you cannot give what you do not have, so peace must begin with me, peace must begin with you.

Umunne m Ndewo nu o.