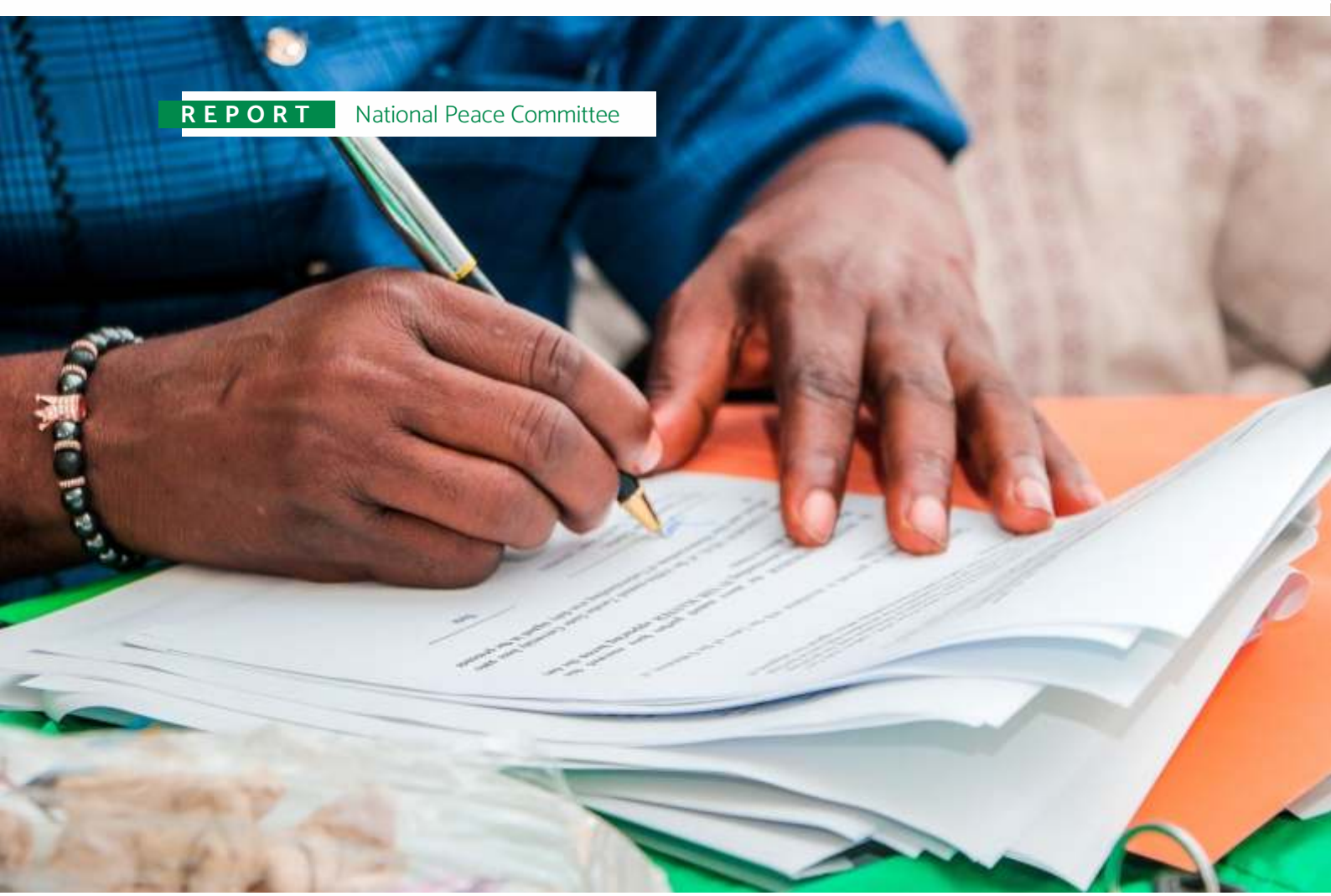

REPORT National Peace Committee

Beyond the Optics:

Understanding the National Peace Committee Interventions in the 2019 General Elections

2019 Report

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The National Peace Committee (NPC) is a non-governmental initiative conceptualized in 2014 in response to emerging threats occasioned by the 2015 general elections. It is an initiative made up of eminent elder statesmen who undertake efforts to support free, fair and credible elections as well as intervene in critical issues of national concern through high-level mediated and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

At inception, the NPC had an urgent, broad based mandate to make modest contributions towards a smooth and peaceful conduct of the 2015 elections, devoid of any breakdown of law and order before, during and after the electioneering process. Consequently, the core mandate is: To observe and monitor compliance with Abuja Accord signed by the political parties during elections; to provide advice to the Government and INEC on resolution of political disputes and conflicts arising from issues of compliance with the Abuja Accord; to make itself available for national mediation and conciliation in the case of post-electoral disputes or crises; to ensure peaceful outcome of General Elections that is acceptable to a generality of Nigerians and the international community.

Core Value of the National Peace Committee
The Core values of the National Peace Committee include neutrality, integrity, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness through: fairness; confidentiality; meritocracy; justice and patriotism.

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Acknowledgement

The National Peace Committee wishes to express her immense appreciation to all her Members for their commitment and loyalty to facilitating peaceful elections in Nigeria. This group of eminent Nigerians work pro-bono to deepen the culture of democratic growth in Nigeria. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic limited the travels and participation of some members in the NPC activities for the 2019 general elections cycles. However, they never relented in supporting the activities of the NPC.

Similarly, the NPC wishes to thank the Head of Secretariat, Fr. Athanasius Atta Barkindo, and all the Secretariat Staff for their diligence, attention to detail and commitment to duty. In particular, for ensuring that this report is published.

The NPC would like to thank the European Union and the former Ambassador to the EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, His Excellency, Ambassador Ketil Karlsen for their support. The Committee is equally grateful to the Swiss Embassy for complementing the European Union support to the Committee. Special appreciation goes to Ms. Laolu Olawumi and Nicolas De Torrente for their technical support and guidance. Finally, the Committee wishes to thank her consultants, donors, partners, supporters, and friends for their contributions in making the work of the Committee much more effective and widespread; especially, the Policy Legal Advocacy Centre, PLAC, Kaduna State Peace Commission, Kimpact Development Initiative, YIAGA Africa, European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), and all others too numerous to mention.

Foreword

On behalf of the members of the National Peace Committee (NPC), it gives me great joy to write the foreword of the NPC 2019 General Election Report, titled: *Beyond the Optics: Understanding the National Peace Committee Interventions in the 2019 General Elections*. The report articulates the activities undertaken by the Committee in support of the peaceful conduct of the 2019 general elections.

Given the deep divisions generated by the violent conflict which followed the 2011 general elections, and were reinforced by the 2015 elections, it was not surprising that the NPC was once again called upon to intervene. In 2015, the then incumbent President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a Christian minority from Bayelsa State, south-south geo-political zone, and candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), was engaged in a fierce contest with Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd.) a Muslim, Fulani from Katsina State north-west Nigeria, and candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), a party that assembled different political groups, moulded into one. Political party campaigns freely deployed acerbic and defaming personal attacks to a level never seen before since the return to civil and democratic rule in 1999.

The period leading up to the 2019 general elections, was dominated by hate slurs, ethnic bigotry and religious prejudices. The elections had 91 political parties with almost 73 presidential candidates. The two gladiators were both northern Muslims – the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari (APC) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (PDP). The election was taking place in the midst of increasing attacks by terrorist groups in the north-east, regional agitations in the south-east, herder-farmer clashes in the north-central, banditry and kidnapping in the north-west. Virtually every part of the country was under attack.

For these reasons, the strategy adopted by the NPC in facilitating and supporting peaceful elections in 2019 was slightly different from that of 2015. The strategy was both administrative and programmatic. At the administrative level, the committee strengthened its secretariat for better coordination in terms of logistics, administration, evidence collection and data documentation to support all NPC engagements and to ensure that interventions are founded on facts, not sentiments.

The programmatic strategy was defined by greater inclusion, partnerships and collaboration with key agencies and international development partners involved with the elections. It was centred on the need for committee members to remain neutral, impartial and objective in all their activities. The mandate of the committee was expanded to go beyond facilitating peaceful elections, and to intervene on other matters that threaten the security and stability of Nigeria.

At the national level, the NPC increased the number of Peace Accord signing exercise from one to two. The first accord signing was to support peaceful election campaigns devoid of incitement and violence. The second was to ensure that candidates accept the outcome of the election as long as it is adjudged to be free, fair and credible, and when in doubt, they should resort to judicial process rather than violence.

Meeting with INEC and the National Peace Committee members in preparations for the 2019 general elections

Furthermore, the accord signing was extended from the national level to the state level. The committee intervened in states' elections, including the staggered elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, Ondo and Edo states. This was necessary to understand the effectiveness of staggered elections.

The committee strengthened its collaboration and partnership with INEC, traditional institutions, international development partners, the security agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the committee worked closely with other state-based peace commissions of Nigeria.

NPC supported the Guinean Delegation for Dialogue and Peace as it sought to establish the Guinean National Peace Committee. The NPC was also part of the Commonwealth Strategic Conference in Ghana to design a peace architecture for Commonwealth countries in Africa.

Beyond elections, the NPC intervened in various conflicts in Nigeria, ranging from the ethnic clashes in Kaduna State, to the herder-farmer conflict in central Nigeria as well as state boundary clashes among the Bassa ethnic group found in Kogi, Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states. This also included Endsars protest as well as the recent regional agitations for independence.

No doubt, the interventions of the NPC in the 2019 general elections has deepened the culture of peaceful elections. The committee would not have succeeded this far without the partnership and collaboration with some critical stakeholders.

On this note, and on behalf of the committee, I would like to express my immense appreciation to all Nigerians for their trust and confidence in the committee. I would also like to thank the members of the committee, who for love of country, have worked tirelessly and pro bono to support peaceful elections in Nigeria. I would like to thank all political parties, INEC, diplomatic missions, international development partners, Nigerian CSOs, traditional rulers and a host of others for their support to the NPC.

May God continue to bless and protect the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR
Chairman, National Peace Committee.

NPC's Background and Expanding Mandate

As far back as 2014, in the build-up to the general elections of 2015, a National Peace Committee had already been conceptualized, ostensibly in response to emerging threats of violence and breakdown of law and order occasioned by the elections. But it was not until a **National Sensitization Workshop held on January 14, 2015**, which provided an opportunity, not just for the signing of a peace accord by all the presidential candidates in the general election of that year, but also for far reaching commitments to accept the outcome of the election no matter the result, that the National Peace Committee emerged, with the primary objective of holding the signatories accountable to their commitments. This was a milestone event and a significant turning point in the 2015 general election.

The Committee was conceptualized in response to emerging threats occasioned by the 2015 general elections. It was a cross-fertilization of ideas from several actors in the later part of 2014. The most notable of these were Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD), the Abuja office of the Peace and Human Rights division in the Swiss embassy, Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) Centre, the Kofi Annan Foundation and the Special Adviser to the President on Interparty affairs, Senator Ben Obi.

The Office of the Special Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan on Interparty Affairs, headed by Senator Ben Obi, in collaboration with the

The Peace Committee participated extensively in state-based elections. This participation has been informed by the research and data collection unit of the NPC Secretariat which assessed the risk of widespread violence in the different states. For example, the NPC undertook the mobilization and signing of Peace Agreements in Kogi, Bayelsa, Ondo, Edo and Anambra states. The experience of the NPC in these states indicates that the Committee alone cannot support elections in all the states, especially when general elections hold.

Office of the National Security Adviser, headed by Col Sambo Dasuki, began a series of consultations and engagements in June 2014, aimed at sensitizing the political class on the implications of their actions and utterances on social cohesion and political stability of the country. The goal was to get them to embrace a civil and patriotic approach in their quest for political power. At the same time, the Swiss Embassy in Nigeria decided to explore ways by which they could support the electoral processes viz-a-viz the prevention of election violence. The Swiss Embassy brought on board the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), a Geneva-based international mediation organization, and a strategic partner of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs on mediation and other dialogue facilitation processes. Professor Ibrahim Gambari of the Savannah Centre was also among the list of those engaged by the Swiss. He too had some ideas around some sort of peace committee but at a slightly different level to what the Committee is today; the Savannah Centre was considering a "Council of the Wise".

The Geneva-based HD in partnership with the Swiss and Australian embassies in Nigeria approached Bishop Kukah to use his influence and goodwill to convene a body of eminent Nigerians to help mediate the inevitable violent conflicts that could result from the elections. Ultimately, the HD initiative which focused primarily on addressing post-election violence was integrated into the Peace Accord process with its proactive mechanisms to resolve election-related disputes before they degenerate into violent conflicts. During the meeting with Bishop Kukah, the Swiss Ambassador had spoken about the possibility of setting up a peace architecture and presented him with a list of proposed members. The Ambassador then sought his help in contacting those on the list, because, as the Ambassador put it, "Kukah knows everyone in Nigeria and everyone knows him, so he can do this."

Several meetings were held at the Swiss embassy and at The Kukah Centre, which Bishop Kukah and others attended. Nonetheless, as the relationship and dialogue gradually developed and consolidated, the initiative for the National Peace Committee was adopted over the Council of the Wise. Bishop Kukah and Dr. Arthur-Martins Aginam, the then Director at the Kukah Centre worked with the Swiss to organize and structure the Peace Committee. Almost around the same time, the efforts of Senator Obi had

culminated in the National Sensitization Workshop on Non-Violence in the 2015 Elections, also known as The Abuja Accord. This workshop, which was held on 14th January 2015, provided an opportunity for the signing of a peace accord by all the presidential candidates in the general election of that year, and for far-reaching commitments to accept the outcome of the election no matter the result, with the primary objective of holding the signatories accountable to their commitments. This was a milestone event and a significant turning point in the 2015 general election. The agreement was signed in the presence of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan and the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, who chaired the event.

Section 3 of The Abuja Accord recommended the setting up of a National Peace Committee for the 2015 Elections comprising respected statesmen and women, traditional and religious leaders from across the country to monitor adherence to the Accord. After the event, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, who later became the convener of the National Peace Committee, was invited by Chief Emeka Anyaoku to a meeting with himself and Mr. Kofi Annan. Bishop Kukah had originally been invited to the event itself, but due to prior engagements, could not make it. At the meeting, Chief Anyaoku and Mr. Annan spoke the provision in the Abuja Accord for the setting up of a National Peace Committee to monitor the implementation of the Peace Accord. Chief Anyaoku and Kofi Annan, therefore, sought the support of Bishop Kukah to help set up the Committee. By the end of the meeting, Bishop Kukah was saddled with the responsibility of assembling eminent Nigerians to form what later became the National Peace Committee, with the one-off mandate to facilitate peaceful elections in 2015.

Bishop Kukah spent a good amount of time reflecting over a range of options on what should go into setting up such a committee given the fractured nature of the Nigerian environment, with the tendency to read or insinuate all kinds of motives in constituting any platform.

Bishop Kukah spent a good amount of time reflecting over a range of options on what should go into setting up such a committee given the fractured nature of the Nigerian environment, with the tendency to read or insinuate all kinds of motives in constituting any platform. He reviewed background, gender, experience, religion, region, exposure, credibility, and other criteria, seeking out the best way to ensure balance, trust, and acceptability of the membership of the Committee. In the end, after penciling down about twenty names, Bishop Kukah set about making calls to them personally. From General Abdusalami A. Abubakar to Cardinal Onaiyekan, the Sultan of Sokoto, Aliko Dangote, Aliyu Mukhtar and so on and so forth, all the people he called responded positively and enthusiastically. Knowing the pragmatic nature of Bishop Kukah, it will not be far-fetched to imagine that at some point he must have thought, "enough conceptualization, let me take this on," and started calling people. The Swiss and other actors might have conceptualized the idea, but it was Bishop Kukah that operationalized it. And so, through the leadership of Bishop Kukah, the first form of the committee started to physically take shape towards December 2014 to January 2015. By the end of January 2015, all the prospective Members identified by Bishop Kukah had accepted to serve on the Committee. On January 25, 2015, the Committee was formally inaugurated with former Military Head of State, Gen. Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR, unanimously adopted as Chairman while former military Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe,

GCON, was made Vice-Chairman. At the end of the inaugural meeting, and with no Secretariat facilities in place, The Kukah Centre was requested to serve as the formal Secretariat of the NPC. It was The Kukah Centre that organized the signing of the 2019 Peace Accords.

In the same vein, the political process leading up to the 2019 elections was creating severe fears and concerns. Once again, the convening power of the National Peace Committee was called upon for intervention. Consequently, The Kukah Centre, the NPC Secretariat, convened a donor conference in August 2018 to identify willing agencies to support the activities of the Committee. Responding to this, donors accepted to support four key areas: generate more support to the NPC Secretariat to function more effectively; facilitate NPC's plenary meetings and ensure that the NPC has the resource to intervene in issues of electoral violence that threaten the peace and stability of Nigeria.

Unlike 2015, the intervention of the NPC in 2019 took a completely different dimension. The signing of the Peace Accord at the national level was made more than once. The first Peace Accord was to commit political parties to peaceful campaigns and rallies devoid of incitement, insults, violence and the deployment of fake news, misinformation and misrepresentation. The second Peace Agreement was to ensure that political parties accept the outcome of the void as long as it is adjudged to be free, fair and credible. While in 2015, the NPC had to contend with just PDP and APC as the major political parties, and with two presidential candidates the then incumbent **President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan**, a Christian minority from Bayelsa State, south-south geo-political zone, and candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and General **Muhammadu Buhari (Rtrd.**) a Muslim, Hausa-Fulani from Katsina State north-west Nigeria respectively, in 2019, there was 91 political parties and 73 presidential candidates. The election management body, INEC, had to deregister most of the political parties in 2021, bringing the number down to 18.

Another significant step undertaken by the NPC is that the peace conference and signing of the peace agreement was devolved to local level as well. The Peace Committee participated extensively in state-based elections. This participation has been informed by the research and data collection unit of the NPC Secretariat which assessed the risk of widespread violence in the different states. For example, the NPC undertook the mobilization and signing of Peace Agreements in Kogi, Bayelsa, Ondo, Edo and Anambra states. The experience of the NPC in these states indicates that the Committee alone cannot support elections in all the states, especially when general elections hold. It is easy for the NPC to intervene in states during staggered elections, but more difficult during general elections. For this reason, the NPC mandated its secretariat to mobilize key stakeholders in 9 states as a pilot scheme for establishing state-based peace architecture. This was done in Adamawa, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Gombe, Taraba, Bauchi, Kano and Enugu states. Again, the NPC strengthened its research and data collection unit to ensure that its interventions are driven by facts, evidence and data rather than misinformed narratives and political sentiments.

The mandate of the NPC was officially expanded to include intervention in non-electoral matters. This decision was initiated by the members in their September 2019 plenary meeting and eventually endorsed. Based on this, a stakeholder meeting was held in April 2021 with key stakeholders and policy makers at the highest level of government to fashion out strategies in response the rising levels of insecurity evidenced by the spate of kidnapping, assassinations, banditry and terrorist attacks across the country. Indeed, the NPC has carved a niche for itself since 2015 and considering the level of trust deficit in state-aligned institutions, the committee remains relevant in the political and social life of Nigerians.

NPC Methodology and Strategy for 2019 General Elections

To navigate Nigeria's political landscape is tough, and to contribute to free, fair and credible elections is even more complex. This made it necessary for the NPC to design a strategic methodology that is both effective and supportive of all its interventions and activities. The strategy was intended to guide NPC members to remain neutral and objective in their engagements. It was also meant to ensure that their interventions are supported by facts and evidence. Importantly, the outcome of this strategy will serve as the basis for various electoral and political policy recommendations for decision makers at the highest level of government including local and international development partners.

The NPC adopted two strategic methodologies for its interventions in supporting peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria - the Administrative Strategy and the Programme Strategy. The Administrative Strategy was meant to strengthen the function of its secretariat in coordination, logistics, administration, evidence collection and data documentation so that the NPC's engagements and interventions are more impactful, measurable and supported by facts. As such, the NPC appointed its head of Secretariat along with a lean staff at The Kukah Centre. It also employed four consultants responsible for conducting research on mapping of conflict areas (flashpoint areas around the country and also how terrorist activities could impact the election); violations of electoral and human rights laws as well as monitoring of the compliance and non-compliance with any agreement or peace accord that is signed.

The Programme Methodology includes stakeholder consultations in the form of meetings, interactive sessions and direct contact and dialogue with relevant agencies including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and state security agencies. Some of the security agencies contacted include the Office of the National Security Adviser, the Nigeria Police Force, the Military, Civil Defence Corps, and the Department of State Security Services. It also engaged continuously with the major political actors in the elections, especially the presidential candidates and party leadership of the two major political parties.

Consequently, The Kukah Centre, the NPC Secretariat, convened a donor conference in August 2018 to identify willing agencies to support the activities of the Committee. Responding to this, donors accepted to support four key areas:

- **Provide more support to the NPC Secretariat to function more effectively**
- **NPC Plenary Meetings**
- **Conference on trust and signing of peace accords**
- **Publication of the report on NPC activities and interventions**

Strengthening the NPC Secretariat

At its inception, the NPC functioned without a physical office space. Consequently, the founding members of the Committee - Ben Obi, Bishop Kukah and His Eminence, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, all accepted that The Kukah Centre be used as the secretariat. However, the increasing expectations and demands made on the NPC meant that the office space, staff and other equipment within The Kukah Centre would unlikely meet up with the workload required of the NPC. While the Kukah Centre offered the office space, the need for office equipment and staffing, including consultants to support the activities of the Committee, were supported by donors. The setting up of the NPC Secretariat and the appointment of the Head of Secretariat and other support staff, greatly enhanced the smooth functioning of the Committee. It also allowed for visibility and impact, making the Peace Committee more accessible and functional.

2019 General Elections and NPC Interventions

The NPC carried out some activities and interventions in order to facilitate peaceful elections and ensure non-violent transition during the 2019 elections. The activities and interventions included – strengthening its secretariat; pre-election plenary meetings; engagement with the international community and development partners; signing of the Peace Accord and the state-based interventions. However, it is important to note that the NPC could not stick to the originally developed framework of activities because as preparations towards the elections ramped up, other unforeseen and unexpected activities emerged that had to be taken into consideration. For example, the conference on Trust that was initially planned was cancelled, and the Peace Accord was organized in its place. Also, sudden and unexpected strategic meetings needed to be held with election monitors, INEC and security services, including preparations for the coming of former president Bill Clinton that were not initially envisaged.

For example, the conference on Trust that was initially planned was cancelled, and the Peace Accord was organized in its place.

Venue of the Second Signing of the Peace Accord

NPC Pre-Election engagements

With an office space, staffing and consultants sorted, the NPC held several pre-election strategic and plenary meetings to design various levels of interventions. Months before the 2019 elections, there were several litigations against INEC. The issue of vote buying and selling became a matter of great concern as well as the escalating levels of insecurity in the country. Following from the Osun and Ekiti governorship elections, the security services were accused of partiality and facilitating rigging in favour of the ruling party. The increase in the number of registered political parties (91 parties) and also presidential candidates (73) was likely to create massive logistical problems for INEC. It became pertinent for the Peace Committee to address some of these issues before the 2019 general elections. Consequently, the Committee held a series of plenary meetings from November 2018 - February 2019 with political parties, security agencies, INEC, the media and key stakeholders. The objective of these meetings was to discuss how to support, intervene and contribute to peaceful elections in Nigeria.

The meetings reviewed the membership of the NPC and brought on new faces that will contribute to the group's intervention effectiveness. The 2015 Peace Committee Report was also launched to highlight NPC's perspective of the 2015 elections. Additionally, the Committee was briefed by the INEC Chairman on the issue of vote buying and the level of preparedness by the Commission to ensure that the election was free, fair and credible. In the same vein, the Committee met with all members of the registered political parties, providing an opportunity for the parties to express their concerns, while highlighting strategies for mitigating some of these problems ahead of the elections. Furthermore, the committee extensively discussed the first signing of the 2019 National Peace Accord for December 11, 2019, including the draft of the Accord, and the possibility of state-based interventions.

These initial meetings were critical to the interventions of the NPC. They afforded the NPC access to materials and information for policy recommendations. NPC members also discussed and formulated strategies on the best possible options for engaging key stakeholders at the highest levels of government. They equally provided the platform for the NPC to remind political actors about their roles in ensuring peaceful and credible elections.

Engaging International Community and Development Partners

Beyond plenary meetings, the NPC equally engaged various stakeholders to prepare for the conference on trust, the signing of the Peace Accord and the 2019 general elections. Following the visit of Bishop Kukah, a key NPC member to Ota, Ogun State, for the reconciliation between former President Obasanjo and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, questions regarding the neutrality and impartiality of the NPC were raised. An assessment meeting, called by the European Union to underscore the impact of that visit and to establish the neutrality of the NPC was set up by the Secretariat on 12th October, 2018. Any perception that the NPC was not neutral and impartial could significantly jeopardise the group's convening power and its ability to facilitate peaceful elections. Bishop Kukah reiterated his neutrality and issued a statement afterwards to reassure the country of the Committee's impartiality to peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Other engagements included a strategic meeting held on October 24, 2018 between the NPC Secretariat and the European Election Exploratory Mission to Nigeria. Both the NPC Vice Chairman, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, GCON and the EU Head of Delegation, Ambassador Karslen Ketil, were present at the meeting. The meeting stressed the preparedness of the NPC in facilitating peaceful elections, and to outline which key areas the NPC was committed to supporting peaceful outcome of the votes. It also discussed possible areas of collaboration between the EU Election Exploratory Mission and the NPC for successful 2019 general elections. The meeting highlighted key issues that were relevant to the EU Election Observation Mission. It also invigorated the EU team in contributing to the success of the elections. Additionally, the

Strategic Meeting: Preparation for the coming of Bill Clinton to Nigeria

The NPC played host to the Former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Additionally, the failure to follow through with the amendment to the Electoral Act, while critical, generated public apprehension. This is in addition to the fact that INEC's preparedness hung in the balance because as of November 2018, INEC's budget was yet to be approved.

NPC Chairman and Head of Secretariat, had a meeting with Mr. Walter Linder, the German Secretary of State to discuss ways of assisting the Committee to facilitate peaceful elections.

A meeting was held on Tuesday 8 January 2019 with Mr. Robert Malley, the President of International Crisis Group. He was accompanied by two other International Crisis Group senior staff, namely Dr Comfort Ero, Director, Africa Programme, and Nnamdi Obasi, Senior Adviser on Nigeria. The meeting highlighted the research findings of the International Crisis Group and how that could facilitate the work of the NPC. The Committee also held other meetings with the former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who headed the ECOWAS Observer Mission and Her Excellency, Patricia Scotland, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth to emphasize the support of the international community for peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria.

The meetings were necessary because there was evidence of human rights and electoral violations that was generating tension and feelings of anxiety across the country. For example, a journalist Mr. Segun Onibiyo, was allegedly arrested on the orders of Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State, over allegations of 'hate speech.' The incident alongside the choice of a Muslim deputy governor in an already heated state, was fueling public sentiments towards the state's elections. The continued detention of the leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria – El Zakzaky and the extrajudicial killing of members of the movement, may aggravate violence alongside the elections. The other prevalent forms of human rights violations that had the potential to impact the elections were the infractions associated with the pro-Biafra movement in the south-east of the country and the resurgence of terrorist violence in the north-east; the herdsmen crisis in the middle-belt and the bandit attacks in Zamfara State.

Additionally, the failure to follow through with the amendment to the Electoral Act, while critical, generated public apprehension. This is in addition to the fact that, INEC's preparedness hung in the balance because as at November 2018, INEC's budget was yet to be approved. This in turn affected their ability to adequately prepare for the elections. As it were, at whatever point the Commission received funds, it had to rush its preparation for materials and perfecting its implementation plans, both of which yielded room for mistakes, manipulation or influence the parties and the public into believing in the compromise of the Commission. The NPC engagements were to facilitate and push forward some of these issues to be attended to, as quickly as possible.

Signing of 2019 Peace Accords:

Initially, it was expected that a single Peace Accord was to be signed, preceded by a conference on trust. However, the emerging sense of fear among Nigerians, the distrust for various political institutions and political actors, as well as the simmering feeling that the security services were compromised, made the Peace Committee members carry out intense engagement with different political agencies, and to also prepare for two Peace Accords. For instance, on November 30, 2018, the leadership of 70 registered political parties, under the auspice of the Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC) threatened to boycott the elections, if the president failed to pass the Electoral Amendment Bill into law. Agreeing with the notion above, they pointed out that the failure to sign it into law will impinge on the credibility and fairness of the process.

Additionally, the propensity for hate speech in the 2019 general elections was already on the rise. Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA) had stated that early warning signs of hate speech were seen in reports received from LGAs in Kogi, Kwara, Bauchi, Borno, Nasarawa, Kano, Taraba, Yobe, Jigawa, Kano, Rivers, Ekiti and Lagos states. On the other hand, the government tended to intimidate, gag its perceived opponents by accusing them of hate speech. The harassment of vocal critics of the government increased tension across the country. For example, the several arrests and continued detention of Mr. Deji Adeyanju, who was initially arrested for his vocal dissent of the president's handling of the elections, and was thereafter rearrested and remanded in custody till February 2019 to answer for a crime for which he had been acquitted. The siege by security agents at Senator Dino Melaye's home in Abuja, was perceived as political witch hunt by a large portion of the general public.

The continued insecurity in addition to the growing levels of hate speech and incitement to violence, made it necessary that a Peace Accord be signed between all registered political parties and their candidates. This Accord was to commit all political actors to conduct peaceful rallies and campaigns devoid of violence, incitement and hate speech. The second Peace Accord was to commit key presidential candidates to accept the outcome of the elections as long as it is adjudged to be free, fair and credible. Thus, the conference on trust was merged with the signing of the first Peace Accord. Following this merger, the NPC held a series of meetings

within the week of December 3, to prepare for the Accord ceremony. All the registered political parties and their presidential candidates were invited, including traditional rulers, religious leaders, the media, the security agencies, the diplomatic community as well as the civil society groups. The 1st 2019 National Peace Accord was signed on December 11, 2018 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, with President Muhammadu Buhari and about 65 other presidential candidates in attendance.

However, the main opposition leader, His Excellency, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP, was conspicuously absent. Although he came to sign on December 12, 2018, at the NPC Secretariat, the concerns raised by his absence were palpable. Many within the ruling party argued that Alhaji Abubakar was arrogant and simply snubbed the president. Others suggested that it was the opposition's demonstration of a lack of trust and confidence in the political process. The Peace Committee was worried about the dangers it indicated and the signal it could send to his teeming followers about the elections. Perhaps, it also made the case for the second signature Accord more important than before, that it was necessary to see both Buhari and his main challenger Atiku in the same room, signing the second Accord to accept the outcome of the elections.

The second Peace Accord generated more excitement in bounds and importance. Both local and international agencies came to accept that the Accord was necessary. Following the tension, anxiety and emerging worries about peaceful elections and how the result would be accepted in a non-violent way, it became necessary, even if for the optics, to see President Buhari and his main challenger, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, sign an accord to accept the outcome of the vote and hug each other. To prepare for this, the Committee held a strategic meeting, and decided to invite Bill Clinton, the former US President, as a guest of honour. Initially, the late Kofi Annan was expected to chair the event, but with his passing, Bill Clinton was considered.

Series of meetings were held, including the meeting with the NPC Secretariat, the Swiss

Embassy, Kofi Annan Foundation, Clinton's Advance Team as well as Mr. Amitabh Desai (Foreign Policy Adviser to former President Bill Clinton). Despite the advanced preparations and the excitement generated by the potential arrival of Clinton to Nigeria, his invitation was aborted. His proposed arrival was an issue of concern, because it would have occurred at a time when political stakes were high, and every little event was latched upon by various political actors to consolidate their political strategies and advance their ambitions. The signing of the second Peace Accord with the potential presence of President Clinton elicited both joy and suspicion.

Although the NPC had already planned separate private meetings between President Clinton and President Buhari, and one with Clinton and Atiku, the timing of these two private meetings became complicated. President Buhari was going to be indisposed for this private meeting with Clinton because he had to attend the APC's final campaign rallies. As such, the consideration was for Clinton to meet up with Atiku, first before meeting Buhari. However, this would be a diplomatic protocol blunder for President Clinton to have a private meeting with Alhaji Atiku before meeting the President. The NPC itself risked being accused as being partial and not neutral, promoting the candidacy of Atiku Abubakar to the detriment of the President. With these emerging events, President Clinton issued a statement to clarify the cancellation of his visit. He clearly explained that his participation in the 2019 second National Peace Accord signing ceremony had to be called off because he feared that his visit risked being politicized.

Additionally, the cancellation of President Clinton's visit came after the Kaduna State governor, Mallam Nasir El-rufai declared that 'foreign observers were likely to go back in body bags.' Again, Alhaji Atiku's visit to the US shortly before the election led to insinuations that he had obtained US support, with the Economist, predicting Atiku's presidency. The perceived partisan nature of the US involvement in the elections and the cancellation of Clinton's visit were already interpreted that the elections could be cancelled. The Peace Committee members then worked round the clock to ensure that the second Peace Accord committing key presidential candidates to accepting the outcome of the vote was successful. The second signing took place on February 13, 2019, at the International Conference Centre. At this event, the President Buhari, the key opposition candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and about 55 other presidential candidates from the 91 registered political parties were in attendance. The international dignitaries, political parties, the diplomatic community and civil society groups, among others were present during the signing. Gifts were presented to Her Excellency, Patricia Scotland, Commonwealth Secretary General, and Alan Doss, President of the Kofi Anan Foundation for their support during the event.

Strategic meeting in preparation of the signing of the Second Peace Accord and the coming of Bill Clinton to Nigeria.

Pre Election Engagement: NPC members with Service Chiefs and Political Parties in Nigeria in preparations towards 2019 General Elections.

Announcement of Presidential Results and NPC Intervention

The issue of fake news – vis-a-vis the circulation of fake results, and the rumour mill that followed the announcement of the results of the 2019 presidential elections - generated a lot of tension across the country. Additionally, the manner in which the victory was celebrated by followers of the APC clearly reinforced division, rather than call for unity within the country. The APC chairman described Atiku as a 'sore loser.' The rigging, the ballot box snatchings, the killings and outright exclusion of many voters from the process led to calls on the NPC to intervene. The rhetoric and the impending violence eventually necessitated the intervention undertaken by the Peace Committee members to bring calm and restore order. From February 27 to March 2 2019, the NPC held a series of meetings, first with the key opposition candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and his team. The second meeting was held with the Vice President, His Excellency, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo and the final meeting was held with His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari.

The public perception was that the Peace Committee's interventions at this stage was to stop Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, from going to court to seek redress. The elections were seen as rigged by INEC in favour of the incumbent, with Nigerians unlikely to accept evil simply because they want peace. At this point, members of the Peace Committees risked losing credibility because of the emerging narrative that they appeared to be standing in the way of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, in reclaiming his stolen mandate.

In reality however, the Peace Committee had facilitated the signing of the Peace Accord, part of which stated that all political parties and their candidates would '*respect that the results can only be announced by INEC, and accept the outcome of the vote as long as it is adjudged to be free, fair and credible, devoid of intimidation and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the law* and *in the event of any disputes that may arise, follow due process by resorting to the courts of law, and to act in a spirit of statesmanship, putting the country first before individual or party interests* and *to fully collaborate with the National Peace Committee - made up of respected statesmen and women, traditional and religious leaders – in its mission to monitor the adherence to this Accord.*'

Therefore, the objective of these meetings was to call for calm and to remind the key political actors of their commitment to the Peace Accord they had signed. They were requested to call on their followers to maintain decorum, avoid provocative utterances and put the country first before personal interests.

> ...rather than call for unity within the country. The APC chairman described Atiku as a 'sore loser.' The rigging, the ballot box snatchings, the killings and outright exclusion of many voters from the process led to calls on the NPC to intervene.

State-based Interventions

The outcome of the presidential elections, with varying degrees of violence, and abuse of the process meant that the Peace Committee had to intervene in various states to forestall any outbreak of violence. The need to carry out state-based interventions both before and during the governorship elections, was also informed by the evidence-based analysis and conflict mapping conducted by the NPC consultants. For instance, in Anambra State, the selection of Peter Obi as Alhaji Atiku Abubakar's running mate, raised the likelihood of pre-election violence in the State. Peter Obi fell out with Governor Obiano and eventually decamped to the PDP. There has been no love lost between them. In the last governorship election in the State, Peter Obi campaigned vigorously against Obiano's re-election. With his selection, it was being suggested that APGA (together with some south-east governors) had reached a deal with Buhari's APC. Ironically, with supporters of Nnamdi Kanu's IPOB viscerally opposed to Buhari, it was unclear whether the mood of the people was with the governors.

Added to this mix, the IPOB menace and their insistence insinuated that there would be no elections in the area. As the running mate to Atiku, Obi's supporters tried to ensure that Obi had a strong showing in his home state, while Governor Obiano and others opposing Obi, did their best to ensure his humiliation in his home state. Interestingly, APGA which had never presented a presidential candidate since the death of Odumegwu Ojukwu and has always been an appendage of the PDP, chose to present a presidential candidate in 2019 – Retired General, John Ogbor from Benue State – a Christian-Christian ticket that obviously did not seem to be aimed at putting up a serious fight in the election.

High Level Dialogue on Peaceful 2019 Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections in Anambra State

1st High Level Dialogue on Peaceful Rerun of the 2019 Election for Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly in Adamawa State

In Adamawa state, the propensity for pre-election, election and post-election violence was high. Adamawa is the home state of the PDP presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar. His supporters were likely to do all they could to ensure his victory at the polls. At the same time, the state governor, Bindow Jibrilla, alongside governors of the entire north-east endorsed Buhari. The north-east and north-west suddenly became political time bombs waiting to explode. Similarly, Akwa Ibom was recently 'on fire' as members of the House of Assembly and five sacked lawmakers of the APC, battled at the state assembly premises. Thugs tried to pursue Nse Ntuen, the factional Speaker and four others out of the chambers. It was thought that Ntuen's plan and others with him, was to impeach Governor Udom Gabriel Emmanuel who is at loggerheads with the former governor of the State, Senator Godswill Akpabio, who had decamped to the APC and was a Senatorial candidate in the election. Like Anambra State, the police sealed off the Assembly complex and later lifted it. The PDP accused the APC, which had vowed to take over the State, of colluding with security agents to make it ungovernable ahead of the 2019 general elections. Meanwhile, some of the governors' aides decamped to the APC.

The situation in Benue State was even more precarious. After months of dueling with the federal government on anti-grazing law and the death tolls from farmers-herders' clashes, the federal government, decided to set up a presidential committee on farmers-herders crisis led by General Musa Ibrahim of the Nigerian Army Defence headquarters - a move Governor Samuel Ortom described as a step in the right direction. Although there was relative calm in the State, the unresolved issues around the herders-farmers clashes and the anti-grazing laws were seen as likely to be politicized during the campaigns and lead to another flare-up. With the allegation that the security agencies are not neutral - especially after a former Defence Minister, Gen TY Danjuma accused them of being culpable in many of the attacks and killings in the Middle Belt - the presence of security agencies in the Middle Belt, as desirable as this served as a potential trigger for another round of violence.

Borno and Yobe states, epicentres of Boko Haram terrorism, were already on the ascendancy in terms of killings and atrocities committed by the group leading up to the elections. One hundred and twenty soldiers were brutally killed in Melete by Boko Haram fighters, raising questions not just about whether elections could hold in some parts of the State but also whether the government's claim that the group had been either 'technically defeated' or 'degraded' was true or mere propaganda. In Rivers State, sometimes called 'Rivers of blood,' due to the propensity for electoral violence in the state, the likelihood of violence during the elections was high. Apart from former Governor Amaechi's unending feud with Governor Nyesom Wike, Amaechi who was the head of Buhari's Campaign Organization

was also at loggerheads with Magnus Abe, the APC Senator representing Rivers south-east constituency. Abe had accused Amaechi of humiliating him before his wife.

The situation in Kaduna state was no different. The Kaduna State Governor, Mallam El Rufai was at loggerheads with the State's three serving senators and had described them as 'useless.' There was also the fact of recurring religious clashes between Christians and Muslims in the State. Despite the religious polarization, Governor El-rufai selected a running-mate, also Muslim – which some saw as smack insensitivity. Additionally, the Shiite challenge, made it evident why Kaduna was one of the states to be closely monitored during the elections.

Finally, there was the governors' vs deputy governors' conflict in states such as Kogi, Kano and Sokoto; with the deputy governor either at loggerheads with his/her former boss or deciding to run against them in the election.

Even though the mere fact of a deputy governor being at loggerheads with the substantive governor is on its own insufficient to cause violence, where the disagreements are politicized and become campaign issues, they could be potential sources of violence. Also, there were unresolved issues arising from the primaries of the major political parties in states such as Imo, Zamfara and Ogun. Such conflicts if not handled well risked disrupting the elections in the states, leading to violence and mayhem.

Thus, before the presidential elections, the National Peace Committee, in partnership with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), carried out interventions in various states. Most of the interventions were carried out in January 2019 in states such as Kano, Benue, Kwara and Kaduna. However, most of the states were still considered vulnerable and prone to electoral violence. Subsequently, before the governorship and state houses of assembly elections fixed for March 9 2019, the Committee Secretariat held strategic meetings with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute to plan for the state-based interventions. The first meeting was held from February 28 - March 2 2019 to design the framework of intervention, agree on the outcomes to be achieved and decide on the target audience in the various states. On the basis of this meeting, successful peace advocacy was carried out in Adamawa, Gombe, Kano, Imo and Anambra states. The success greatly limited the outcome of violence.

The first stage of these interventions consisted of state visits for the organisation of Peace Conferences within the states with the theme, 'High-level Dialogue on Peaceful 2019 Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections.' The objective of the state visits was to reinforce the message of peace as espoused by the National Peace Committee to the major stakeholders ahead of the 2019 gubernatorial elections. Visits were made by staff of the Secretariat of the National Peace Committee to Gombe, Adamawa, Imo, Anambra and Kano states. The conferences in the various states were successfully organized with INEC representatives, security agencies, the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Political Parties, Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders, Civil Society, Women's Groups, Youth and Student Bodies, Media Houses and the General Public. Stakeholders re-stated their commitment to peace.

2nd Townhall meeting with key stakeholders for the promotion of peaceful conduct of the Governorship and State House of Assembly Re-run Elections in Kano State.

State Elections, Inconclusive Results and NPC Interventions

The gubernatorial elections were plagued with violence and irregularities that caused the elections to be declared inconclusive in some states. This resulted in heightened tensions within opposing candidates and the electorate as there were fears about the manipulation of election results. It also made it necessary to carry out another round of state-interventions and peace conferences. Consequently, after the governorship elections on March 9th 2019, the results from Kano, Benue, Sokoto, Adamawa, Bauchi and Plateau were declared inconclusive. The process in Rivers State was suspended indefinitely. Dates were fixed for reruns and the reports of possible violence during the rerun elections were genuine. Once again, the Peace Committee had to intervene in these states. The NPC Secretariat held a strategic meeting on March 15-16 2019 and interventions were carried out in Kano, Bauchi, Adamawa, Benue, Plateau and Sokoto states from 18th - 22nd March 2019. The objective was to encourage voter turnout, promote peaceful elections and respect for the rule of law. This particular intervention was designed to target vulnerable individuals and groups likely to be exploited by political actors for violence. A review of all the interventions was carried out by the NPC Secretariat from April 15 – 16, 2019. It assessed the successes and the challenges faced during these interventions.

Follow-up intervention in Adamawa state

Governorship elections in Kogi, Bayelsa and Taraba states

One-day Peace conference in Kogi state

The success of the 2015 Peace Accord made it necessary for the members of the National Peace Committee to intervene and support peaceful elections in 2019. As such, the NPC organized the signing of two Peace Accords in Abuja, the first was on December 11, 2018 to support peaceful campaigns devoid of incitement and violence. The second Peace Acord, signed on February 13, 2019, was in order to contribute towards a peaceful transition process. Although relatively peaceful, these elections exposed some fault lines in states, as there were numerous reports of voter disenfranchisement, vote buying, electoral violence, over-militarisation of the electoral process, among others.

In recognition of these incidences, and in acknowledgement of the potential for the escalation of violence in the forthcoming governorship elections in Bayelsa and Kogi states, the NPC developed a regional peace initiative to deliver the message of peace to these two states. It also included the need to intervene in post-election conflicts that emerged in states such as Taraba. These initiatives included a visit to Kogi,

One-day Peace conference in Bayelsa State.

One-day Peace conference in Taraba state

Bayelsa and Taraba states, first to prepare for the governorship elections in Bayelsa and Kogi states, and second, to engage with key stakeholders in Taraba on how to mitigate the increasing herder-farmer, Tiv-Jukun crisis that threatened to disrupt peace and social cohesion in the state. Some of the key stakeholders involved in all these processes were INEC, security agencies, political parties, traditional and religious leaders, civil society, youth and women's groups as well as the general public. They were invited to amplify the calls for peace and to commit themselves to its pursuit.

In both Bayelsa and Kogi states, reports provided by the NPC consultants indicated that it was highly likely that violence would emerge in the November 2019 governorship elections in the two states. It was likely that the elections could be plagued with irregularities, violence, voter intimidation, vandalization and other forms of electoral misconduct. Equally important was the perception of high levels of voter apathy, trust deficit in the electoral system, as well as low voter turn-out. These challenges made the intervention of the National Peace Committee necessary and significant. In Kogi State, the NPC, in partnership with the Search for Common Ground and INEC, organized a one-day peace conference on November 7 2019 while in Bayelsa state, the NPC organized the conference in partnership with the Niger Delta Dialogue Centre on November 11, 2019. The conference involved all the political parties, the governorship candidates, INEC, security agencies, traditional rulers, women and youth groups including the United National Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Both events culminated in the signing of a Peace Accord by all political parties participating in the elections.

In Taraba State, the National Peace Committee, in partnership with Taraba Peace Advocates and the Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Management, Taraba State University, organized a Peace Forum on November 14, 2019 at the Taraba State University. The objectives of this intervention by the NPC in Taraba State was to highlight the nuances of the Taraba State conflict, and provide policy recommendations for mitigating it. Importantly, it was meant to engage young people to create awareness regarding the Taraba conflict, and also educate the youths (particularly women) on means through which they could become peace builders in the state. The NPC also agreed to work with the Taraba State Peace Institute to conduct research and design evidence-based policy recommendations that would assist government, NGOs and International Development partners in facilitating sustainable peace in Taraba.

Edo and Ondo States 2020 Governorship Election Report

In line with its mandate, the National Peace Committee supported the peaceful election process for Edo and Ondo states held on 20th September and 11th October, 2020 respectively. The Committee held a meeting on 11th September with INEC, the security agencies and various NGOs to examine the prospects and challenges for peaceful elections in the two states, and identify strategies for mitigating any difficulties that could derail the process. This was followed by a series of private engagements, phone calls, mediations and conversations that culminated in the signing of the Peace Accord in Edo and Ondo states.

Positives:

NPC Engagement with Key Stakeholders:
Leading up to the peace signing ceremony and the governorship elections in Edo and Ondo states, the national peace committee members were fully committed and played their roles in mobilizing the political parties, contestants, INEC and security agencies towards supporting peaceful elections in the two states. The NPC members were supportive of the processes, the organisation and the implementation. They made themselves available for all media engagements, and direct engagements with key stakeholders in the two states. The convening power of the chairman and the convener substantially supported the peaceful process.

NPC State-based Interventions and Growing Acceptance:
The NPC is known for intervening at the national level, with some peace conferences organised at the state level to call for peaceful elections. For the first time, key members of the NPC have physically travelled to the states to support a state-level peace accord signing ceremony. The impact of their presence of huge, with large turn out in both Edo and Ondo states. More than 90% of key stakeholders, and 100% of all the relevant stakeholders were present. There was genuine appreciation of the NPC intervention. General opinion indicates that the intervention helped achieve peaceful process in both Edo and Ondo states.

Organization:
The peace accord signing ceremony was very well organized in both Edo and Ondo states. They proceeded on time, they were well moderated and didn't last too long. Edo state lasted (1 hour 30 minutes), while Ondo state was (1 hour 50

minutes). It was attended by key electoral stakeholders, particularly all major political candidates, as well as traditional rulers, INEC, IPAC, security agencies and CSOs. The halls were well decorated (stage, banners etc), it was broadcast live on 3 TV channels, both regional and national, there were adverts in the print media and a good social media presence. In both events, adequate security was provided as a result of the meeting between the NPC, the IGP and the governors of the two states.

Credibility of the NPC:
In Edo, the NPC Chairman, General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR, was present, including the NPC Convener, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah and Prof. Ameze Guobadia. However, in Ondo state, the NPC was represented by the Sultan of Sokoto (head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs), Cardinal Onaiyekan and Bishop Kukah (convener). Unfortunately, Gen. Abubakar (chairman) could not travel, but he sent a video message that was broadcast. It was clear that these prominent national figures commanded respect with the political players in Ondo State, and that their presence significantly raised the profile, credibility and visibility of the event. Their presence also reinforced the need for total commitment to the Accord.

Messaging:
The peace accord is comprehensive, encompassing not only the prohibition of violence but also the acceptance of the results and the recourse to legal means for any contestation. The messaging about compliance with the peace accord was underscored by all speakers, especially the Sultan of Sokoto for the NPC who stressed accountability and responsibility. The key candidates (APC, PDP and ZLP) all spoke and gave assurances of their commitment but there was no symbolic handshake or embrace, which was the sole procedural 'hiccup' of the ceremony (although this part cannot be scripted in advance). The specific provisions of the accord were read out during the ceremony, but more could be done to disseminate them (distribution of the text of the accord to all participants – the accord was not in the 'folder' that was given to all attendees for example; social media threads that highlight the specific provisions etc).

It was clear that these prominent national figures commanded respect with the political players in Ondo State, and that their presence significantly raised the profile, credibility and visibility of the event. Their presence also reinforced the need for total commitment to the Accord.

Collaboration with INEC:
Shortly be NPC interventions in Edo and Ondo states, series of meetings were held between the NPC Secretariat and representatives of INEC to fashion out modalities for closer collaboration and partnership. The INEC Chairman demonstrated that he is keen to work very closely with the NPC. He was in constant communication with the NPC Chairman and Convener. Working closely with the NPC secretariat, he followed up with the candidates to get their commitment to attend, he obtained security at the venue (large police deployment) and he ensured that the NPC VIPs would travel to the ceremony (a Presidential jet was put at the disposal of NPC to fly them from Abuja to Akure and back). It is clear that INEC needs the NPC for its convening power and credibility with the candidates, and that the collaboration is fruitful.

Collaboration with other CSOs:
The NPC-Kukah Center worked closely with other CSOs for the organization of the event. Funding was secured through the existing EU grant to the NPC (and upcoming CH funding), but also by contributions by Yiaga Africa and ECES (TV broadcasts). Kukah Centre (NPC Secretariat) worked closely with Yiaga Africa to provide TV, Radio and social media coverage of the events. The Kukah Centre organised video recordings of NPC members to be aired before, during and after the ceremonies calling for peaceful elections. In Ondo, The Kukah Centre (NPC Secretariat) partnered with the 'Vote Not Fight' campaign (funded by USAID) was allowed to feature on the stage with the candidates after the signing of the accord.

Recommendations

State-based Peace Committees:
The NPC members were able to devote time and energy to Edo and Ondo elections because they were staggered elections. However, if elections are to hold in more than 30 states concurrently, it will be impossible for NPC members to cover every state. This raises the question of state-level peace architecture that could be established at the state level and work with NPC members at the national level, providing feedback, policy recommendations and supporting the implementation processes.

Composition of the NPC:
While the NPC members present commanded

respect, they are all elderly men, revealing a visible disconnect with the electorate in general and some of the key perpetrators of violence in particular. For instance, the Sultan had a clear message for the youth: "don't be used by politicians", but this warning also needs to come from spokespersons that these youth can identify with more closely. The NPC has already decided that it needs a more diverse and inclusive membership (women, youth), something that this event again clearly illustrated and that needs to be acted upon in the months ahead.

Timing:
The accord was signed 5 days prior to the election, which is arguably a time when attention is focused on the upcoming poll and campaigns are intensifying. However much of the violence takes place in the weeks before, which raises the question of the appropriate timing. Perhaps a two-step approach could be envisaged, a pre-commitment based on parties discussing the peace agreement weeks ahead and then a public signing ceremony prior to the election day itself (see below).

Monitoring and Follow-Up:
The strategy of the NPC is to rely on its electoral consultant (Kimpact) and NPC consultants in carrying out electoral observation to provide information about compliance with the accord. (The NPC members and Secretariat left Ondo after the signing of the peace accord). It is necessary to consider whether NPC Secretariat could remember in Ondo to monitor the elections, violations or compliance with the accord and to follow up with the candidates based on this information in case of violations, alerts the media etc, and of course it also relies on the normal law enforcement mechanisms. However, this could be expensive and resource intensive if there are elections in more than 30 states of the federation.

There is no monitoring or reporting mechanism within the accord itself involving the parties, such as is the case with negotiated codes of conduct. Without setting up a separate mechanism that would be resource intensive and cumbersome, what measures could be taken to increase compliance with the peace accord? Perhaps more pre-electoral discussions with the parties about issues of electoral violence, the content of the accord, their commitments, etc under the auspices of the NPC, INEC and IPAC (Inter-Party Advisory Council) would be fruitful to secure their buy-in ('ownership'). Cf The attached study on Voluntary Codes of Conduct highlights that the most effective way for commitments to be respected is for the parties to be involved in the formulation of the commitments, ie to discuss/negotiate them, to raise specific issues to be addressed with each other and the mediator etc. ('to participate in the cooking rather than to be served a ready-made dish').

Finally, it is obvious that the role of the NPC is increasingly been needed and accepted. There is therefore a greater need for institutionalisation and legal back-up of the NPC.

Anambra State 2021 Governorship Election Report

In line with its mandate, the National Peace Committee supported the peaceful election process for Anambra state held on November 6th, 2021. Prior to the election, reports indicated that the potential for violence and disruption was high due to the increasing levels of kidnapping, banditry and the activities of Fulani herders in the south. Most significantly, the greatest threat was posed by the agitation of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, movement, who have declared on several occasions that they will not allow elections to hold in the Southeast. They declared sit-at-home many times as a form of non-violent protest. Besides, the spate of killings and assassination rapidly increased, and it prompted the government to deploy massive security in the area. For example, the police announced on October 14th, the deployment of 34,587 personnel to Anambra to ensure peace during the poll. This consists of conventional police officers, Police Mobile Force, the Counter-Terrorism Unit, Special Forces, Explosive Ordnance Unit, Force Intelligence Bureau, INTERPOL, Special Protection Unit and a medical team.

To support peaceful elections in Anambra and to facilitate a successful signing of the Peace Accord, the Committee held series of meetings; both private and non-private with key stakeholders from Anambra state, including INEC, the security agencies and various NGOs to examine the prospects and challenges for peaceful elections in Anambra state, and identify strategies for mitigating any difficulties that could derail the process. This was followed by a series of private engagements, phone calls, mediations and conversations that culminated in the signing of the Peace Accord Anambra state. Bishop Kukah and the NPC Head of Secretariat, Fr. Atta Barkindo, held a meeting with Anambra state stakeholders in Enugu on the sideline of the Catholic Bishops Conference on August 24th, 2021. The NPC Secretariat also held series of meetings to coordinate logistics that will lead to the signing of the Accord. Another meeting was held with CSOs that belong to the European Union – SDGN Programme on October 6, to synergize and identify areas of collaboration for a successful outing in Anambra. The NPC Secretariat team was in Anambra from 22nd – 27th October to mobilise stakeholders, political parties and the security agencies for the signing of the Peace Accord. More than ninety percent of all those invited for the event turned up and the signing of the Peace Accord on Thursday November 4th, 2021 was largely successful.

Positives:

NPC Engagement with Key Stakeholders: Leading up to the peace signing ceremony and the governorship elections in Anambra state, the national peace committee members were fully committed and played their roles in mobilizing the political parties, contestants, INEC and security agencies towards supporting peaceful elections in the two states. The NPC members were supportive of the processes, the organisation and the implementation. They made themselves available for all media engagements, and direct engagements with key stakeholders in the two states. The convening power of the chairman and the convener substantially supported the peaceful process. Bishop Kukah was particularly committed, following up with private phone calls and meetings. The Chairman signed all the letters of invitation and the NPC Head of Secretariat travelled to Anambra and presented the letters of invitation personally to all the chairmen and candidates of the eighteen political parties participating in the elections.

NPC State-based Interventions and Growing Acceptance: The NPC is known for intervening at the national level, with some peace conferences organised at the state level to call for peaceful elections. Travelling to Anambra state reinforced the state-based interventions of the Peace Committee. It also showed that the committee is committed to all parts and segments of Nigeria. Anambra is predominantly a Christian state, and a Catholic one for that matter. The intervention of Bishop Kukah, to a large extent, provided the leeway of success. The impact of the presence of General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR and Bishop Kukah was of huge significance. It contributed to IPOB calling off its sit-at-home order and also reinvigorated the confidence of voters to turn out and vote. More than 90% of key stakeholders, and 100% of all the relevant stakeholders were present. There was genuine appreciation of the NPC intervention. General opinion indicates that the intervention helped achieve peaceful process in Anambra state.

Organization: The peace accord signing ceremony was very well organized in Anambra state. Despite security threats, the NPC secretariat team travelled to most of the LGAs to distribute letters of invitation. All relevant stakeholders were invited, and letters of invitation acknowledged. The ceremony, although close to the election period, proceeded on time. The event was well moderated and lasted for an hour thirty minutes. It was attended by key electoral stakeholders, particularly all major political candidates, as well as traditional rulers, INEC, IPAC, security agencies and CSOs. The halls were well decorated (stage, banners etc), it was broadcast live on 3 TV channels, both regional and national, there were adverts in the print media and a good social media presence. During the ceremony, adequate security was provided as a result of the meeting between the NPC, the IGP and the Anambra state governor. A chopper was provided to ferry the Chairman of NPC from Asaba, the Delta state capital to Awka, the Anambra state capital for the event.

It was clear that both General Abdulsalami and Bishop Kukah, prominent national figures, commanded respect with the political players in Anambra, and that their presence significantly raised the profile, credibility and visibility of the event.

Credibility of the NPC: In Edo, the NPC Chairman, General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR, was present, including the NPC Convener, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah and the NPC Head of Secretariat, Fr. Atta Barkindo. Other members of the NPC could not travel due to insecurity, health and other prior engagements. It was clear that both General Abdulsalami and Bishop Kukah, prominent national figures, commanded respect with the political players in Anambra, and that their presence significantly raised the profile, credibility and visibility of the event. Their presence also reinforced the need for total commitment to the Accord. The INEC Chairman accepted to sign as a witness, indicating the increasing collaboration between INEC and the NPC.

Messaging: The peace accord is comprehensive, encompassing not only the prohibition of violence but also the acceptance of the results and the recourse to legal means for any contestation. The messaging about compliance with the peace accord was underscored by all speakers, especially General Abdulsalami, Bishop Kukah and Professor Mahmood Yakubu, the INEC Chairman. The Anambra state Inter-party Advisory Council Chairman, Comrade Uche, spoke on behalf of all the political parties participating in the elections and gave assurances of their commitment. All party candidates and chairmen signed the accord and exchange pleasantries on the stage in the presence of the NPC members. Ahead of the ceremony, the draft of the accord was distributed to all political parties and their candidates to raise any issues of concern that they may have. The specific provisions of the accord were read out during the ceremony to the hearing of all participants.

Collaboration with INEC: Shortly before NPC interventions Anambra state, series of meetings were held between the NPC Secretariat and representatives of INEC to fashion out modalities for closer collaboration and partnership. The INEC Chairman demonstrated that he is keen to work very closely with the NPC. He was in constant communication with the NPC Chairman and Convener. Working closely with the NPC secretariat, he followed up with the candidates to get their commitment to attend, he obtained security at the venue (large police deployment) and he ensured that the NPC VIPs would travel to the ceremony. He facilitated the travel of the convener

of the NPC and the NPC head of secretariat. The INEC Chairman was asked to signed the Accord as a witness, alongside the Chairman of the NPC. The continuous collaboration between INEC and the NPC is important for compliance with the accord.

Collaboration with other CSOs: The NPC-Kukah Center worked closely with other CSOs for the organization of the event. Funding was secured through the existing EU and Swiss grant to the NPC. Further request was made to the Swiss for the second tranche of funds to augment other aspects of the budget that were limited. Further contributions by Yiaga Africa and ECES (TV broadcasts), and NDI (ushers) were made. In Anambra, the Kukah Centre (NPC Secretariat) worked independently but closely with Highlight Media to provide TV, Radio and social media coverage of the events. The Kukah Centre organised video recordings of NPC members to be aired before, during and after the ceremonies calling for peaceful elections. The Kukah Centre

This means that NPC Secretariat should remain behind in monitoring compliance and violations of the accord and how it impinges on the electoral process. However, this could be expensive and resource intensive if there are elections in more than 30 states of the federation.

(NPC Secretariat) also partnered with the 'Vote Not Fight' campaign (funded by USAID) was allowed to feature on the stage with the candidates after the signing of the accord.

Recommendations

State-based Peace Committees: The NPC members were able to devote time and energy to Anambra state elections because they were staggered elections. However, if elections are to hold in more than 30 states concurrently, it will be impossible for NPC members to cover every state. This raises the question of state-level peace architecture that could be established at the state level and work with NPC members at the national level, providing feedback, policy recommendations and supporting the implementation processes. At the moment, the state-based peace architecture has been mobilized in 8 states. There is need to formalized this and escalate it to other states as well.

Timing: The accord was signed 5 days prior to the election, which is arguably a time when attention is focused on the upcoming poll and campaigns are intensifying. However much of the violence takes place in the weeks before, which raises the question of the appropriate timing. Perhaps a two-step approach could be envisaged, a pre-commitment based on parties discussing the peace agreement weeks ahead and then a public signing ceremony prior to the election day itself (see below).

Monitoring and Follow-Up: At the moment, the NPC continuous to rely on its electoral consultant (Kimpact) and NPC consultants in carrying out electoral observation to provide information about compliance with the accord. The NPC members and Secretariat left Anambra state after the signing of the peace accord. It is necessary that the NPC considers setting up its own mini-situation room, to basically monitor compliance with the Accord and report back to the members for further action. This means that NPC Secretariat should remain behind in monitoring compliance and violations of the accord and how it impinges on the electoral process. However, this could be expensive and resource intensive if there are elections in more than 30 states of the federation. In this case, the NPC can have a centralized monitoring room, while receiving reports from other states, through its state-based peace architectures.

There is no monitoring or reporting mechanism within the accord itself involving the parties, such as is the case with negotiated codes of conduct. Without setting up a separate mechanism that would be resource intensive and cumbersome, what measures could be taken to increase compliance with the peace accord? Perhaps more pre-electoral discussions with the parties about issues of electoral violence, the content of the accord, their commitments, etc under the auspices of the NPC, INEC and IPAC (Inter-Party Advisory Council) would be fruitful to secure their buy-in ('ownership'). Finally, it is obvious that the role of the NPC is increasingly been needed and accepted. There is therefore a greater need for institutionalisation and legal back-up of the NPC.

NPC Mobilisation for State-based Peace Architecture

Following the decision of the NPC to expand its mandate to intervene in non-electoral matters, it became expedient for the Committee to work with key stakeholders at the regional and state levels. On this basis, the NPC mandated its secretariate to mobilise for state-based peace architectures that it can work with in terms of partnership and support. This responsibility also became part of the European Union and Swiss support to the NPC in the no-cost extension support. Between August and November 2021, the NPC Secretariat carried out mobilisation in 9 states to underscore whether these key stakeholders will be willing to work with the NPC at the national level. A criterion as such integrity, neutrality, objectivity, influence and knowledge of the community among others was developed for the selection of the stakeholders. This mobilisation was conducted in Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi, Benue, Taraba, Kano, Enugu, Kwara and Kogi states.

During the mobilization and meetings, the NPC Secretariat team reinforced the significance of the National Peace Committee in facilitating and supporting conflict management and peaceful processes in Nigeria. Considering the level of trust deficit in state aligned agencies, the presence of the Committee also injected some confidence in the process. A presentation was done on the Background to the mandate and function of the National Peace Committee and Guidance for the setting up of the Committee. The focus of the facilitation includes among other things:

- To bridge the gap between the National Peace Committee and other eminent elders and Peace related Organizations in the respective geo-political zones and States in Nigeria.
- To educate participants and members on the mandate and function of the National Peace Committee.
- To reinforce the Committee's neutrality, public respect, and influence on election and peacebuilding matters.
- To mobilisation for the establishment of State Based Peace Architectures.
- To guide the eminent elders who have agreed to be members of the State Based Peace Architecture on the modus operandi of the Committee.

Two presentations were made; the first was on the background and mandate of the NPC to familiarise the state-based key stakeholders on the working of the NPC. The second presentation was on the guidance for the setting up of the state-based peace architecture and the structure for its functioning independent but in collaboration with the NPC. This included the terms of reference, code of conduct and the general personnel policy that will guide their activities.

In Adamawa state, the NPC secretariat engaged the Adamawa Peace Initiative. In Kano, it was the Kano State Peace Commission with 26 members, co-chaired by Emeritus Prof. Ibrahim H. Umar and Most Rev. Dr. John Namaza Niyiring, Catholic Bishop of Kano. Furthermore, the Secretariat mobilised 10 members in Enugu state, with HRH Igwe John Azubuike Ibe as the coordinator. In Benue state, 7 key stakeholders were mobilised. Similarly, Taraba has 7 key stakeholders engaged with Prof. Talla Ngarka as coordinator. In Bauchi Engineer Ahmad M.Y. Jumba with 6 other members were also engaged. In Gombe state, 14 members were mobilised.

Despite the successes recorded during these mobilisations, it is important to mention that there were certain challenges also encountered. The selection and invitation of participants across geographical board in the various States was clearly intense, in terms of knowing who fits the bill. It was even more difficult getting their contacts and reaching out to them to obtain their buy-in. There was also the problem of expectations from the selected key stakeholders, and how they will perceive the NPC and its engagement as an Abuja-based committee. Another major concern was the risk associated with the travels across the respective states in Nigeria especially as it concerns the security of the Team and participants. However, all the states mobilised indicated willingness to work with the NPC at the national and state levels. It is now left for further discussions and deliberations to be carried out to strengthen the architecture in the mobilised states.

Meeting with Guinean Delegation

The NPC members met in a closed-door meeting with the Guinean Delegation for Dialogue and Peace. The meeting was held on November 12, 2019 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel.

The Guinean delegation was led by Dr. Saran Daraba Kaba, the former Guinean Minister for Science, Research and Education. The meeting, facilitated by The Kukah Centre, the secretariat of the Peace Committee, had in attendance General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the NPC Chairman and senior members of the group. During the meeting, the NPC agreed to support the Guinean Dialogue and Peace Group in facilitating peaceful and non-violent elections in Guinea. The engagement also showcased the recognition given to the efforts of the National Peace Committee members in supporting the growth of democracy in Nigeria. It also showed the growing regional role the Committee is willing to undertake for peace and stability in Africa. The challenges encountered include the issue of language as the Guinean delegation spoke French. Again, there is need for increased funding to support the NPC's involvement in Guinea.

Commonwealth Conference in Ghana

The National Peace Committee was invited by the Commonwealth to participate in a conference of Peace Councils and Committee from across Commonwealth countries. The conference was held from June 21-26, 2019 in Accra, Ghana. The NPC highlighted its interventions in the Nigerian elections and the NPC model and structure was selected as a framework to be used in designing peace architecture for Commonwealth countries.

The NPC Head of Secretariat outlined the history, structure and framework that guides the operation of the Peace Committee. He presented the independence and non-partisanship of the Committee, highlighting the convening power of members and their capacity to work with government officials in an uncompromising way. The NPC presentation was well received. It was chosen as the model to be adopted by the Commonwealth in designing Peace Architecture for Commonwealth Countries. The NPC Head of Secretariat was selected by Commonwealth to help design this architecture in line with the Nigerian model. A challenge which emerged from this event was that some of the countries - Cameroon, Guinea and Gambia - invited the NPC to support their countries' peace processes. This is especially challenging with regards funding and how the NPC can address this.

Importantly, there is no clear idea on how the NPC can frame this request into its work-plan before the 2023 elections.

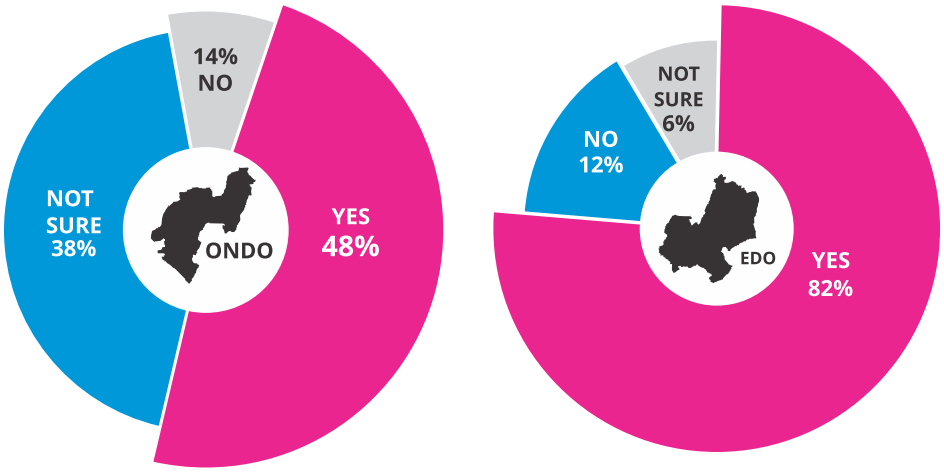
Symbolic Assessment:
Impact of the NPC on the Edo and Ondo Election

To gauge the perceptions of citizens on the impact of the interventions in the Edo and Ondo state gubernatorial elections, a survey was conducted by KDI/NEVR trained field researchers across the thirty six (36) LGAs of Edo and Ondo states. Some of the findings of the study are presented below:

- Over two-thirds of the respondents consider the 2020 Edo and Ondo States governorship elections peaceful.
- The majority (82%) of the Edo State respondents are aware of the National Peace Committee Intervention. In comparison, only 48% of the respondents in Ondo state are aware.
- Intimation/harassment top the list of predominant violence before the intervention of Oba of Benin and the Peace Accord Signing event by National Peace Committee in Edo and Ondo States.
- 71% of those that are aware of the Peace Accord Signing think it had a more positive impact on the peaceful outcome of the Ondo State Gubernatorial Election.
- Two-Thirds of the respondents in both states believe that the election would have been violent if the National Peace Committee (NPC) and Oba of Benin had not intervened.

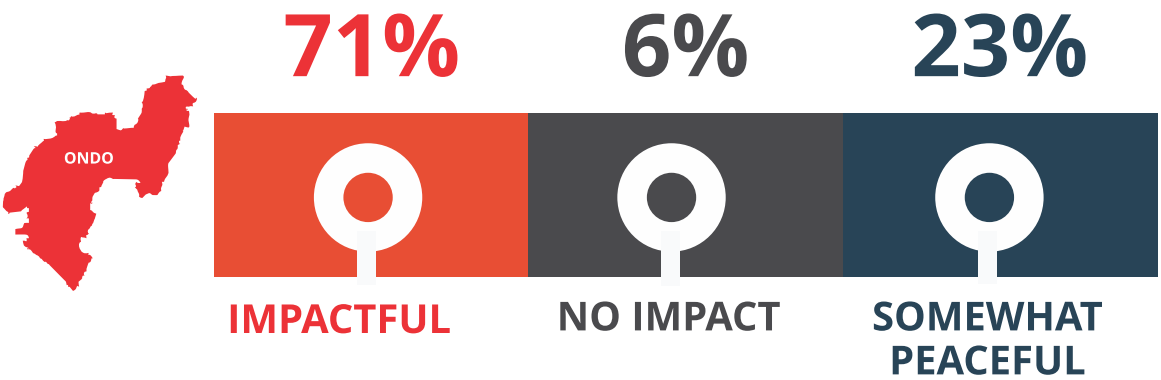
Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.14

Awareness of the National Peace Committee's Interventions in Edo and Ondo Governorship elections



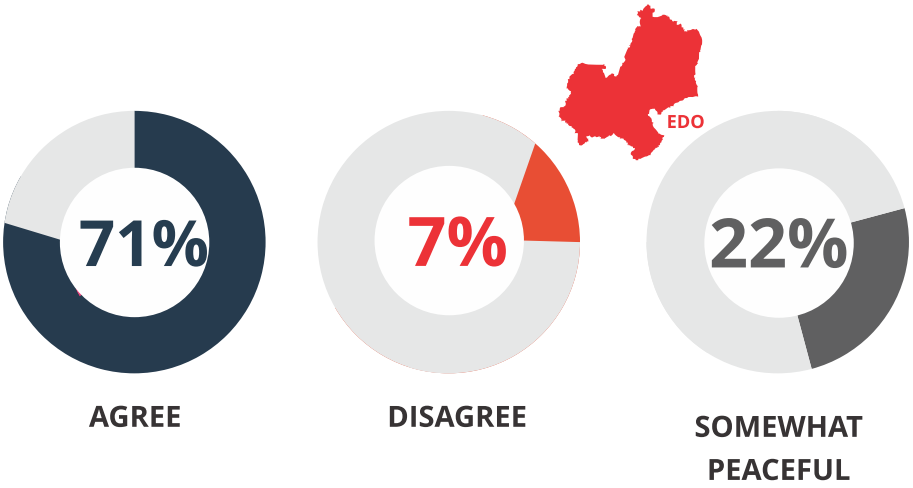
Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.23

Impact of The Peace Accord Signing on the Outcome Of
The October 10, 2020 Governorship Election In Ondo State



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.24

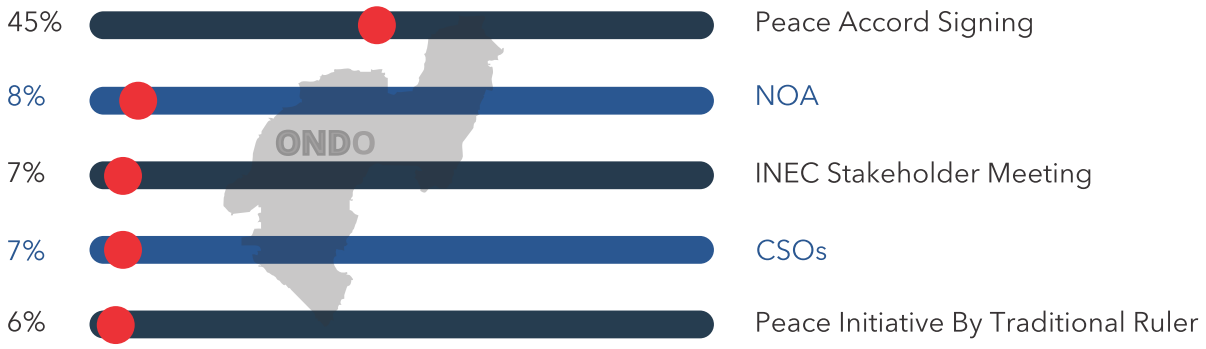
Impact of The Peace Accord Signing on the Peaceful outcome of the election in Edo State



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.26

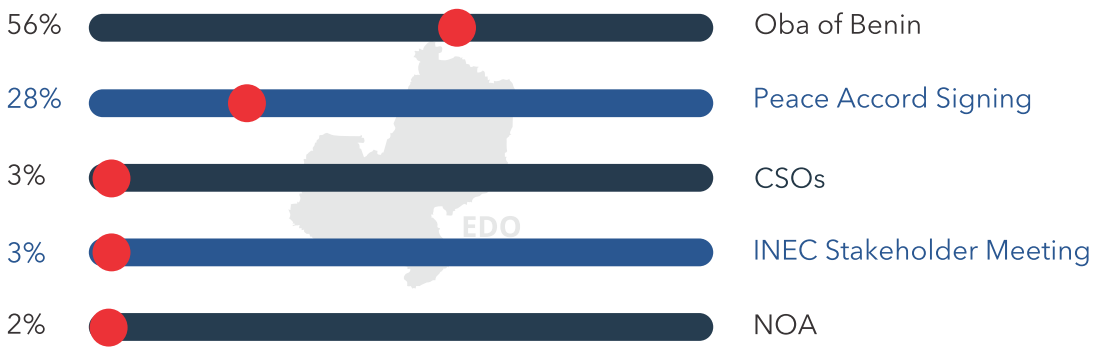
Overall Impact of Interventions by Key Stakeholders in the Edo and Ondo Governorship Elections

Which of the following interventions by major stakeholders had a greater impact on the outcome of the election?



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.25

Which of the following interventions by major stakeholders had a greater impact on the outcome of the election?



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.27

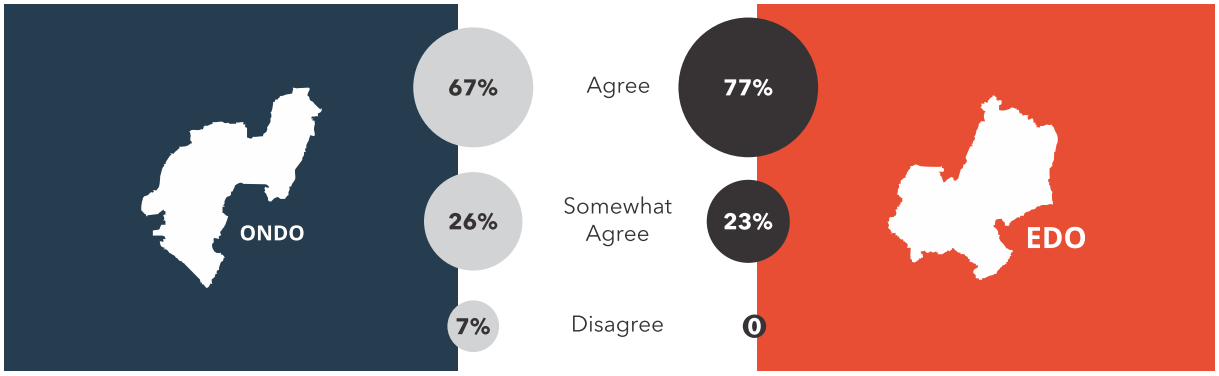
What do you think would have been the outcome of the elections if NPC had not intervened considering the pre-election situation of the states?

ONDO

EDO

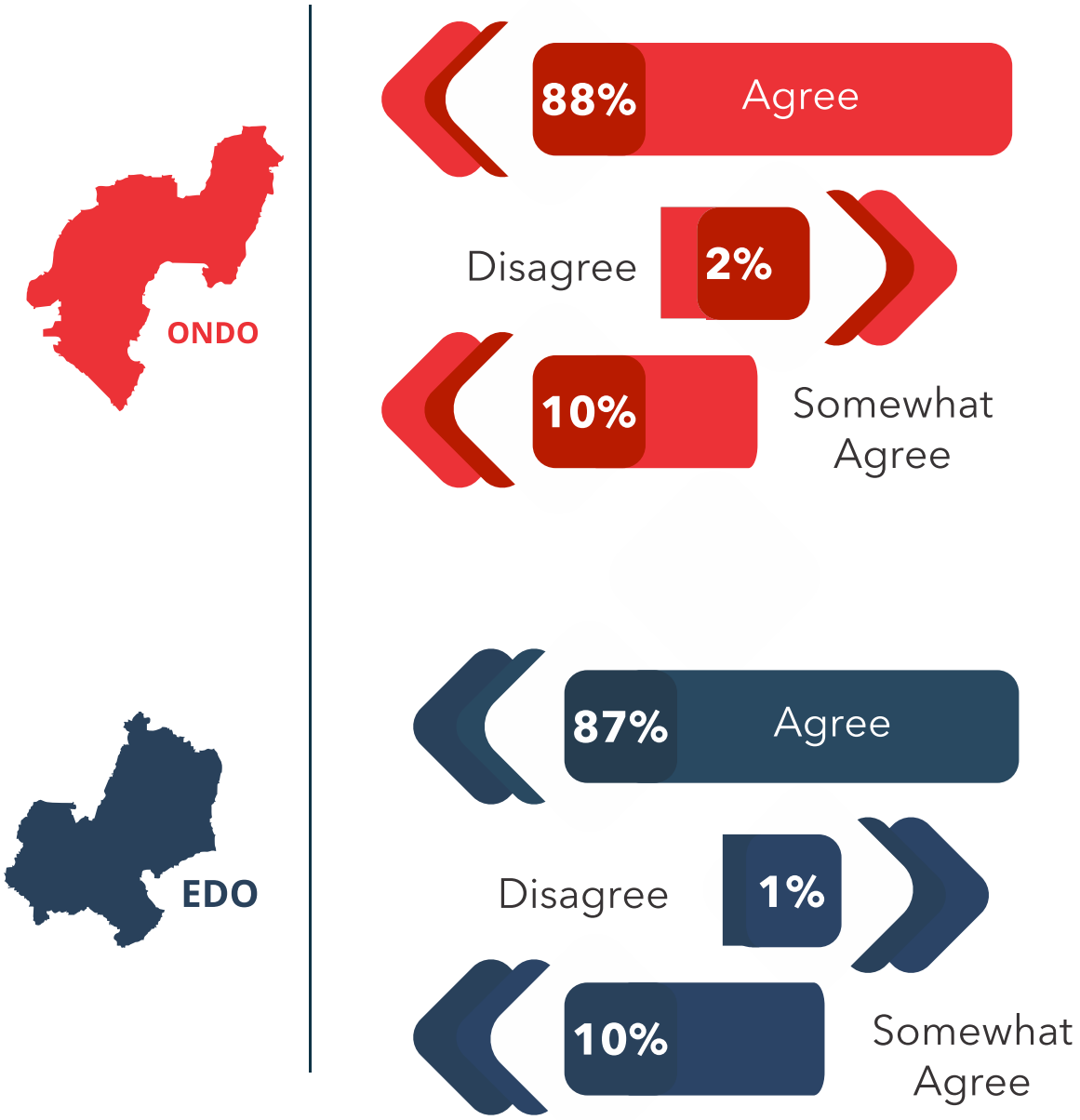
Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.29

Would you agree that the candidates abided by the peace pact they signed at the Peace Accord Signing?



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.30

would you agree that the peace accord signing should be sustained for future elections?



Source: Kimpact Development Initiative Report, Creating a Culture of Peace, p.31

Post-Election Phase: Challenges and the way forward

It is important to recognize that one of the most significant strengths of the Peace Committee is its convening power. The ability of eminent Nigerians to come together and convene political stakeholders at the highest level of government remains the conveyor belt for the successes of the NPC interventions. However, these are not done without challenges.

The first major challenge is the electoral process itself. For instance, during the 2019 general elections, the number of registered political parties increased to 91, with 73 presidential candidates. Party primaries were riddled with irregularities and intrigues. The impending elections saw the emergence of the two major candidates - the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari, and the main opposition, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. Another major concern was the increase in the circulation of fake news, hate speeches and misinformation. INEC, the electoral umpire was daunted with court cases that became disruptive and distracting. Most of these issues should have been dealt with by

> Importantly, Nigeria's political and electoral landscape is constantly uncertain.
> **Getting political actors to the table is constraining and energy-sapping. Dates are constantly shifted, changed or even cancelled.**

institutions empowered by law to do so. However, in most cases, NPC had to engage with relevant stakeholders to remind them about their constitutional responsibilities to ensure a peaceful electoral process.

Another major challenge was the issue of perception. It was difficult for the Peace Committee members to express their individual perspectives and convictions without putting the mandate of the committee into question. This was linked to the growing expectations of the Peace Committee members and the need for them to be seen as non-partisan and unaligned to any politically exposed persons or institutions. It was also expected that the Peace Committee reviewed its membership and brought on board fresh faces that represented the aspirations of Nigerians in terms of facilitating peaceful elections and transition. However, there is some challenge is identifying credible Nigerians who are non-partisan, neutral and willing to work pro bono.

Another major challenge for the Peace Committee, is ensuring a sustainable funding base. It remains important that the Peace Committee does not rely on the government for funding, logistics or staffing. This is because, once it takes government funds, it becomes liable to conditionalities and requirements placed by the government. The current funding from the EU took the NPC Secretariat almost a year to negotiate. This funding runs out in 2020, and it would be necessary for the Peace Committee to review its funding framework, bring on new members and draw up a strategic framework for effectiveness and service delivery.

Importantly, Nigeria's political and electoral landscape is constantly uncertain. Getting political actors to the table is constraining and energy sapping. Dates are constantly shifted, changed or even cancelled. The Committee constantly had to work with available dates given by the key political actors. For example, the signing of the Peace Accord was slated for 11th February 2019. However, it was suddenly moved to 13th February 2019 at the request of the Presidency. This had huge cost implications that the Secretariat had to undertake.

Policy Recommendations

Following the interventions of the NPC in the different phases of the 2019 general elections, it is necessary that the following policy recommendations be implemented in order to facilitate and achieve peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria.

Amendment and passing of the Electoral Act into law – the government should take steps to follow through with the amendment and the signing of the Electoral Act into law. This will first, curb public perception that the government is uninterested in political reforms because it wants to coordinate an electoral process that favours the incumbent. Second, it will fast-track the need for electronic voting and eradicate the malpractices that are perceived to be linked to a manual process. Above all, it will make the processes easier, less cumbersome, more transparent and acceptable.

Fragmentation of INEC: Obviously, INEC as an agency empowered by law to conduct Nigeria's general elections is over-stretched and overburdened. The agency is in-charge of registration of political parties, coordination, logistics, award of contracts, supply of materials, etc. In some instances, INEC is also overburdened with legal issues. There is a need to amend the laws that created INEC, to break the agency into independent but collaborative agencies to make it more effective and functional.

Deployment of Security Services: The deployment of security services to guard and protect security before, during and after elections should be reconsidered. Over the years, it appears security personnel have become compromised and are part of the problem. The military, trained in the art of war, should be taken off any political and democratic process. The police should be empowered, trained and instructed to provide adequate security during elections, and be able to rise up to the challenges of modern democratic processes. The deployed security services should be at the command of INEC, the agency empowered by law to conduct the elections, not the security authorities.

Design new criteria for establishing political parties: Nigeria's political parties are many, some lacking in ideology, direction and work-frame. Many of the parties have no national appeal, and appear to be set up to disrupt other stronger opposition, muddling the entire electoral process. While retaining the constitutional right to establish political parties, INEC should set up new and strict criteria for setting up new parties to make them more effective.

This will first, curb public perception that the government is uninterested in political reforms because it wants to coordinate an electoral process that favours the incumbent.

Summary of NPCs Policy Recommendations

01

Fragmentation of INEC

INEC needs to be broken down into disparate but complementary sub units that will handle different aspects of its core mandate. By decentralising responsibilities, the agency can become more effective!

02

Deployment of Security Services:

There's a need to overhaul security deployment during elections starting with taking military off election duties. Going forward, all police and other non-military agencies to deployed for election duty should be placed under the command of INEC who should in turn train them for the tasks expected of them.

03

Design new criteria for establishing political parties

INEC should set up new and strict criteria for setting up new parties to check the abuse of privilege leading to the floating of parties that are not viable by any standard.

The way forward for the NPC – Road Map for the Future

It is necessary that the Peace Committee be allowed to continue with its interventions. Within the context of the Road Map for the Future, the activities of NPC will be guided by a proposed action plan, and is broadly categorized into short-term and long-term activities.

The short-term activities include:

- Human Resource
- Establishing Sub-National Peace Committees
- Strengthening of NPC's Institutional Set-up and processes
  - Review of Membership of the NPC to be more inclusive and gender sensitive
  - NPC Legal Framework
  - Corporate Affairs Commission Registration
  - Drafting a Constitution to guide the NPC members
  - Drafting Terms of Reference for the NPC Members (both National and would be state-based)
  - Designing Code of Conduct for NPC members (both National and would be state-based)
  - Standard Operations Procedure (Operational Guidelines)

The long-term activities:

- Electoral reforms
- Interventions in elections and mediation in election related violence
- Interventions in non-electoral conflicts
- Report and publication of Committee's work

One Day NPC Evaluation Report

Since the formation of the National Peace Committee in 2014, the group has supported and contributed immensely to peaceful elections in the country. It has organized the signing of the Peace Accord during the 2015 and 2019 general elections, committing political parties and candidates to peaceful rallies and campaigns devoid of incitement, violence, and insults. It has equally encouraged parties and their candidates to sign pledges to accept the outcome of the votes if it is adjudged to be free, fair and credible.

Similarly, the committee has worked so hard to devolve these peace accord signing ceremonies to the states to forestall any potential violence that may erupt during the off-circle elections. These were done in Kogi, Bayelsa, Edo, Ondo, and Anambra. Besides, the Peace Committee has trained women and youths on political participation and peaceful elections simultaneously. It has mobilized for the establishment of state-based peace architectures in 9 states to support the work of the committee at the state level. Beyond elections, the committee has intervened in other non-electoral areas and issues that threaten the peace and stability of Nigeria.

As the country moves towards the 2023 elections, and to strengthen the capacity of the NPC to carry out its mandate more effectively and impactfully, the NPC Secretariat organized a One-Day Evaluation of the performance of the Committee on November 16th, 2021, at Rockview Classic Hotel, Wuse 2, Abuja. Participants were selected from key CSOs, government agencies, security institutions, political parties and other groups directly involved with elections in Nigeria. The conversation centered on the mandate of the NPC, its achievements, and challenges, and what the Committee should do to make its work more effective. The recommendations include:

- The Committee should priotised partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders as a central approach to its intervention framework

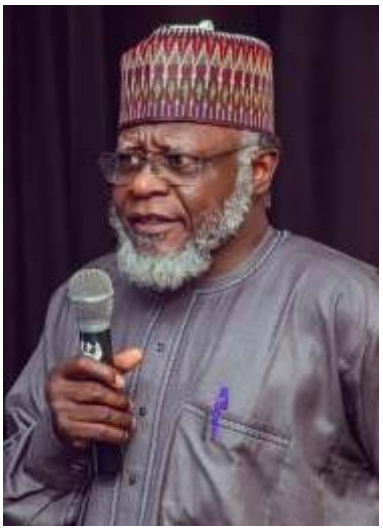
- Compliance to the Peace Accord should be strengthened both at the state and national levels. The NPC should constantly engage INEC and political parties to agree on the content of the accord and modalities for holding defaulters accountable.

- The Peace Accord should be signed months and weeks ahead of the election. This will provide the opportunity to observe compliance, identify emerging issues and conduct some engagements with political parties and candidates to mitigate any fallout from non-compliance

- The NPC should move beyond contributing to peaceful elections. The committee should pay attention to what happens way before the elections. Some of the ongoing violence and conflict, if not check-mated, can disrupt any future elections. The NPC should intervene before, during and after elections.

- For some time, the NPC is seen as elitist and heard only during elections. The Committee should amplify its partnership and engagement with women groups, youths, traditional rulers, community leaders as well as religious leaders.

Finally, the NPC was advised to work within its mandate, and allow other institutions empowered by the constitution to intervene accordingly. The Committee should continue with its engagement with policy makers at the highest level of government, bringing government attention to issues that may naturally not reach their domain.



Summary of Activities under NPC Future Road Map

Conclusion

The NPC was conceived as a ad-hoc intervention mechanism meant to discharge an urgent national assignment of ensuring the indivisibility and indissolubility of Nigeria and the preservation of its corporate existence as a frontline democracy and a respected member within the committee of democratic nations. At inception, the NPC had an urgent, broad based and generalised mandate to make modest contributions towards a smooth and peaceful conduct of the 2015, devoid of any breakdown of law and order before, during and after the electioneering process.

The mandate of the NCP has not changed in any significant respect and remains to contribute towards the conduct of credible and transparent general elections. By so doing, enhance a smooth and peaceful transition of power or its retention, should the incumbent win, devoid of any chaos and breakdown of law and order.

Having evidently discharged this responsibility effectively in the 2015 and 2019 general elections, there is a felt need, not only to sustain and deepen its mandate, but to expand it to include other areas of national interest and concern. It also necessary to support regional or state-based peace committees that will work with the National Peace Committee at the centre. It is important to register the NPC with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) so as to accord it a corporate personality and perpetual succession.

> Consequently, the Peace Committee will push for electoral reforms, organize interventions in electoral and non-electoral conflicts, and provide mediation in cases of election-relation violence.

Background Information for the National Peace Committee (NPC) Report: Formation of the NPC

The lead-up to the 2015 general elections generated a lot of tension and fear that many informed analysts both within and outside the country predicted the disintegration of Nigeria. The situation was compounded by the very vitriolic tone of the campaign in which religious, ethnic, and hate slurs were commonly used to pit groups against each other. Tensions were further heightened by the existential threat posed to Nigeria by the Boko Haram insurgency primarily in the Northeast along with the destabilizing influence of such ethnic militias like the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) in the Southwest, the Niger Delta Militants in the South-South, and the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra (MASSOB) in the Southeast.

In response to these, and in an effort to assure increasingly worried Nigerians that the country will outlive the 2015 elections, the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Interparty affairs, headed by Senator Ben Obi, in collaboration with the office of the National Security Adviser to the President, headed by Col Sambo Dasuki, began a series of consultations and engagements in June 2014, aimed at sensitizing the political class on the implications of their actions and utterances on social cohesion and political stability of the country. The goal was to get them to embrace a civil and patriotic approach in their quest for political power. These efforts culminated in the National Sensitization Workshop on Non-Violence in the 2015 Elections, also known as The Abuja Accord. This workshop, which was held on 14th January 2015, provided an opportunity for the signing of a peace accord by all the presidential candidates in the general election of that year, and for far-reaching commitments to accept the outcome of the election no matter the result, with the primary objective of holding the signatories accountable to their commitments. This was a milestone event and a significant turning point in the 2015 general election. The agreement was signed in the presence of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan and the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Chief Emeka Anyaoku who chaired the event. Section 3 of The Abuja Accord recommended the setting up of a National Peace Committee for the 2015 Elections comprising respected statesmen and women, traditional and religious leaders from across the country to monitor adherence to the Accord.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, who later became the convener of the National Peace Committee was invited by Chief Emeka Anyaoku to a meeting with himself and Mr. Kofi Anan. At the meeting, Chief Anyaoku and Mr. Anan spoke briefly about the 2015 elections and the general concerns and fears within the nation and the international community about the possibility of electoral violence. Chief Anyaoku

spoke of the significance of the warm embrace between the then incumbent President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, and Major General Buhari (rtd.) in promoting peace during the elections. He also reiterated how all the leaders of the political parties who came to the Conference had signed the peace agreement. The provision in the Abuja Accord for the setting up of a National Peace Committee to monitor the implementation of the Peace Accord was also emphasized. However, they were unsure of how to go about it. Bishop Kukah on the other hand was well placed to do that as he not only knew a lot of influential people across the country, but he was also very well respected. Chief Anyaoku and Kofi Anan, therefore, pleaded with Bishop Kukah to help set up the Committee. By the end of the meeting, Bishop Kukah was saddled with the responsibility of assembling eminent Nigerians to form what later became the National Peace Committee, with the one-off mandate to facilitate peaceful elections in 2015.

Interestingly, Bishop Kukah had also held a similar meeting with the Swiss Ambassador a month earlier. During the meeting, the Swiss Ambassador had spoken about the possibility of setting up a Counsel of the Wise, had given the Bishop a list of proposed members, and sought his help in contacting those on the list, because, as the Ambassador put it, "Kukah knows everyone in Nigeria and everyone knows him, so he can do this." Armed on two fronts with similar tasks, Bishop Kukah proposed consolidating both ideas into one; a suggestion that was met with approval. He then set about mobilizing the statespersons that would eventually form the Committee. The Bishop spent a good amount of time reflecting over a range of options on what should go into setting up such a Committee given the fractured nature of the Nigerian environment, with the tendency to read or insinuate all kinds of motives in constituting any platform. He reviewed background, gender, experience, religion, region, exposure, credibility, and other criteria, seeking out the best way to ensure balance, trust, and acceptability of the membership of the Committee. In the end, after penciling down about twenty names, Bishop Kukah set about making calls to them personally. All the people he called responded positively and enthusiastically.

By the end of January 2015, all the prospective Members identified by Bishop Kukah had accepted to serve on the Committee. On January 25, 2015, the Committee was formally inaugurated with former Military Head of State, Gen. Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, GCFR, unanimously adopted as Chairman while former military Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, GCON, was made Vice-Chairman.

At the inaugural meeting, the Committee adopted the following terms of reference:

* To observe and monitor compliance with the Abuja Accord signed by the political parties on 14 January 2015.
* To provide advice to the Government and INEC on the resolution of political disputes and conflicts arising from issues of compliance with the Abuja Accord.
* To make itself available for national mediation and conciliation in the case of post-electoral disputes or crises.

At the end of the inaugural meeting, and with no Secretariat facilities in place, the Kukah Centre was requested to serve as the formal Secretariat of the NPC.

My Afterword

The reader already knows that the NPC did not initially have a shelf life because it was meant to be a one-off exercise to douse the tensions that had mounted ahead of the 2015 elections. The NPC is therefore still here because Nigerians across almost all spectrum of the society, members of the international community, the media, the political class, both local and international Election Monitoring Groups have all reposed confidence in our work. The NPC has benefited tremendously from these encouragements by way of both funding support and constant meetings and interactions. The NPC has learnt many useful lessons from these consultations and interactions.

This is the second in the series of Reports of the activities of the National Peace Committee, NPC published by its National Secretariat, The Kukah Centre. These publications have become necessary because, in our view, memory and record preservation is fundamental to a nation's ability to learn from the past, identify areas where wrong turns have been taken and help the nation navigate back to the path of cohesion and greatness. We believe that by putting these records down and making these publications available, scholars in our higher institutions, students and other young citizens can find reference material to further their understanding and appreciation of the struggles of our nation towards its illusive greatness.

The NPC is therefore still here because Nigerians across almost all spectrum of the society, members of the international community, the media, the political class, both local and international Election Monitoring Groups have all reposed confidence in our work.

The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, has very clearly demonstrated that it finds in the NPC an ally in its very grueling task of trying to give Nigerians a credible platform for the legitimacy of our nation's electoral processes. Our visible collaboration with INEC has been appreciated by the body and the political actors and increased the legitimacy of the process in the eyes of ordinary citizens. The Chairman in his Foreword in this publication has already stated the efforts that the NPC is making towards improving in the commitment of the political actors to the signing of the Peace Accord.

To this end, we now have two-stage signings of the Peace Accords at the national level to further help to force the hands of the political actors towards living up to their promises towards ensuring that their campaigns do not jeopardise the process or mar citizens' chances in exercising their hard-earned mandate. We hope that going forward, the Peace Accords will be given some teeth so that politicians can be further held to account.

The Covid 19 pandemic as we all know slowed the entire world down. Countries like ours were not left out and this had consequences for the work of the NPC. The challenges, restrictions and protocols made it difficult for the NPC to have the full complement of all its Members. Notwithstanding these, even when Members were unable to travel, their goodwill was always part and parcel of the process. The off-season elections also saw the NPC being called upon to participate in state elections. These were exceptions rather than the rule.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairman and Members, I wish to pay tribute to three key persons who were central to the NPC's birth. First, is Mr. Kofi Anan, former UN Secretary General who passed away on August 18th, 2018 ahead of the 2019 elections. His Centre continues to work closely with the NPC. Next is Chief Emeka Anyaoku, the consummate diplomat who turned 80 this year (Congratulations, Sir). Next is Chief Ben Obi, the Special Adviser to the President on Interparty Affairs, a body set up by the then President Goodluck Jonathan. The existence of that body helped to smoothen Interparty relations, and this led to the setting up of the body known as the Interparty Advisory Council, IPAC. He it was who laid the foundation for what later metamorphosed as the NPC by organising the interparty Conference which offered the platform for the signing of the first Peace Accord on January 14th, 2014. The NPC appreciates them, and we therefore continue to encourage the two big Parties to come to the table of IPAC and offer leadership across parties so that the political class can collaborate across party lines. In this way, they can reduce the unnecessary high levels of political rancor among political parties in Nigeria. I wish to thank Fr. Athanasius Barkindo and all his staff at The Kukah Centre. He and his team have ensured the efficient management of the NPC Secretariat and these publications. I hope you find this document useful and educative.

Most Rev. Matthew Hassan KUKAH
Convener, NPC.

Photo Gallery

First Signing of the Peace Accord

Second Signing of the Peace Accord

Meeting with INEC and the National Peace Committee members in preparations for the 2019 general elections

Kukah Centre Secretariat of the NPC and IPSCM Conference on ensuring sustainable Peace and Development in Jalingo Taraba State

2019 Report

Beyond the Optics:

Understanding the National Peace Committee Interventions in the 2019 General Elections

VISION

The National Peace Committee envisages a Nigeria that is built on Peace, Justice and Equality, where every citizen has the right to democratic participation and can live freely in any part of the country, contributing to its growth, development and stability.

MISSION

Conducting free, fair and credible elections is the bedrock for Peace and Development in every nation. The National Peace Committee seeks to identify and articulate all the challenges that derail credible elections and peaceful transfer of power in Nigeria. It aspires to design strategies and set up proactive mechanisms for engaging stakeholders irrespective of region, religion and political affiliation for the attainment of peaceful elections in Nigeria.

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