

By Emmanuel Y. Kwache

On Wednesday, 15th December, 2010, the National Stakeholders gathered at Thisday Dome, Ahmadu Bello Way, Abuja for solidarity messages to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Turakin Adamawa and former Vice-President, who was recently selected as a consensus candidate based on the zoning which was agreed upon in 2002.

Many attended and addressed the conference with the theme: Building Consensus for National Unity. Those who actually read out papers supporting the emergence of Atiku Abubakar's candidature, and which many see as a person who will fly the flag of the Peoples Democratic Party, were General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida[rtd], Chief Simon Okeke, representing the Ndiigbo at home and in Diaspora, Mr. Ken Nnamani, former Senate President, who represented former Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, representing the Middle Belt and environs, Wing Commander Peter Biakpara [rtd] representing the South-South and Dr. Abimbola Ogunkelo, representing the Yoruba.

In short, there were groups like the Northern Political Leaders Forum, Igbo Political Forum, South-South Unity Forum and Yoruba Redemption Forum and many other interest and special groups from various parts of the country. These various groups spoke of one thing, that Atiku Abubakar has made enough contributions to democracy and should be given the chance to rule this country in 2011. They said, since the Northern Political Leaders Forum had chosen him as the candidate who will represent the north at the primaries, all Nigerians should rally round him and give him total support to become President. Some of the speakers reminded Nigerians of how he stepped down for Late MKO Abiola to emerge as a flag bearer of the Social Democratic Party.

Similarly in 1998, he, teamed up with some elder statesmen and patriots and brought out Olusegun Obasanjo out of prison and installed him President, even when he had no home base, others stated emphatically at the conference. Some noted his role in stopping third term by a dictator while some recalled how he was humiliated, even as Vice-President of the largest and most populous black nation on earth. Some on the other hand, pointed out how he had started from a humble background to conquer poverty and shame.

The hall of the Thisday Dome was filled to the brim with all the big personalities you can think of. I saw Air Vice-Marshal Hamza Abdullahi[rtd], Alhaji Dahiru Bobbo, Prince Tony Princewill, the Kalabari prince, Chief Aneke Efemeni, the former National Coordinator, Goodluck/Sambo Support Group, who three days earlier, had declared support for Atiku Abubakar alongside more than two thousand persons. From Adamawa State, Alhaji Ibrahim Bapetel led more than five thousand of us to Abuja for that affirmation of the candidature of the democrat.

There were many individuals like Chief Osita Ogbu, Dr. Ben Obi, Professor Chukwuma C. Soludo, Chief Dubem Onyia, Chief [Mrs. Titilayo Ajanaku from Abeokuta, Dr. Funke Adedoyin from Kwara State, Chief Peter Okocha from Delta and Otunba Oyewole Johnson Fashawe. The names were many and this space cannot contain them. The security had a hectic time controlling the crowd and parking space was a problem.

In his remarks after seeing the mammoth crowd and the magnificent support, the former Vice-President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the Turakin Adamawa and Zege Mule of Tiv, said in a

statement that "Those who make peaceful change impossible, make violent change inevitable". Some mischief makers went to town and distorted the true meaning of the statement. We cannot run away from history. We enrich our minds when we go into our memory banks and quote copiously from leaders that took their people along with them in governance. That was meant to remind us that we have to go into the past, and that people should not refuse to honour simple agreements. How can I, as a child of God, and the priesthood, append my signature to a vow and bond only to deny that I did so? That was in essence what Atiku Abubakar was saying, that we should be honorable.

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida[rtd], the former President has said, "I am an Honorable man", and he had kept to the decision taken by the Northern Political Leaders Forum. The statement was not to incite, stir or conceptualised within a context of treason as others thought. It was meant to re-examine our spiritual life, our social interconnect and whether we have been truthful in our dealings with others. So let us remove that statement from the context of treason and place it in the political domain of equity, fair play, dignity, justice and the knowledge of God without mischief and deception.

That is why without fear of contradiction, two days later, the Amalgamated Atiku Abubakar Presidential Campaign Organisation issued a statement saying Atiku was ready to be arrested, to show that he did not mean any harm by that statement. He is too refined and urbane to ruffle any feathers; he is simply a man of peace. His pedigree does not show him as a man of violence or saboteur. In his Customs days, we understood that some people stood on his way up but he did not turn violent. During Obasanjo's era as number two, he was harassed, intimidated, embarrassed and humiliated. He had the means and background support but he turned to the law courts for interpretation. In the then, Gongola state to the present Adamawa when he had problems with Dr. Bala Takaya, if not because of his magnanimity, there would have been more problems.

There is no Adamawa man that I have known that is violent or aggressive. From all the political juggernauts from Adamawa State, like Alhaji Bamanga Muhammadu Tukur, Alhaji Hassan Adamu, Brigadier-General Mohammed Buba Marwa[rtd], Professor Jubrin Aminu, Air Commodore Dan Suleiman[rtd], Professor Iya Abubakar, Alhaji Muhammadu Gambo Jimeta, Alhaji Adamu Bello, Chief Wilberforce Jura, and many others are not susceptible to making frivolous statements or betraying the sanctity of Nigeria and they were never known to cause friction or to sabotage the unity of this country.

In fact the theme of the National Stakeholders Conference was: Building consensus for national unity. The only way we can build national unity is when we deliberately stretch our hands across the bridge and keep to any word we utter from our mouth. We must honour all agreements, whether they were made under harsh environments or under comfortable shades. It is more of a provocation, if we do not honour an agreement reached in good faith. We must not resort to terrorising, harassing and intimidating others because we have been told the truth.

A book I am currently reading says. "it is not because there is not enough to share that people say they have not had enough: it is because they never get to a point in their lives when they would say, I am satisfied, contented, fulfilled, I have had enough, let me step back for others". We should thank God and be glad that we have arrived at this stage. I will therefore, call on President Goodluck Jonathan to step back and organise credible elections, then handover to Atiku Abubakar on 29th May 2011. He is above 50 years, he can come back in 2015 honorably and we will vote for him honorably, as a credible candidate. But as it is now, trying to turn the truth on its head because of some reasons is unacceptable. The Gibeonites deceived the

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Written by Administrator

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children of Israel and signed a treaty with them that they were from a faraway place and wanted peace with them. They wore sack and tattered clothes and looked haggard and hungry. The Isrealites did not know they were nearby neighbours. When the children of Israel later got to know this, they were angry but some elders said since we have entered an agreement with them and God was a witness so let us restrain from attacking them. If we are true Christians, let our actions resemble the one of Christ. Let us give the chance to Atiku Abubakar to govern this country for only four years from 2011 to 2015. Moreover, Atiku Abubakar is a man of peace who is persevering, enduring, patient, and of good disposition. In politics, we allow such awakening statements so as to reflect on our journey in life. And as Christians, we must desire righteousness at all times. I believe the Mr. President I watch on television does not look like someone who will change the rule of a game in the middle of it. It is Biblical for an honour be be honoured.

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