

# ***YELWA SHENDAM PEACE AFFIRMATION***

**19 February 2005<sup>1</sup>**

In the name of God, the Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we the representatives of the Muslims and Christians of various ethnic nationalities in Shendam local government area of Plateau State who have gathered here pray for true peace in our community and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed that deny the right to life and dignity.

- 1. LEADERSHIP:** We the representatives of this community hereby acknowledge the paramountcy and rulership of His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam. We condemn the use of derogatory names to the paramount ruler by anybody within the community. We hereby resolve that His Royal Highness the Long Goemai of Shendam be addressed by his title and be acknowledged and respected as such.

We acknowledge that lack of central leadership in Yelwa had contributed to the disharmony in Yelwa community. We resolve that the issue of chieftaincy of Yelwa be referred to Shendam traditional council for urgent steps to be taken, without prejudice to the accepted and approved method of the government.

- 2. RELIGION:** We hereby affirm our belief and faith in the sanctity of all religious places of worship, whether it is a Mosque, a Church or a Shrine.

We condemn in strong terms the desecration of all places of worship, killings in the name of God, and call on all to refrain from incitement and exhibition of religious sentiments and or the instigation of such sentiments for selfish ends.

We resolve to create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust in one another.

We pledge to educate our young ones to embrace the culture of respect for these values.

- 3. ETHNICITY:** We acknowledge our ethnic and tribal diversity. We condemn in strong terms their negative application in our day-to-day life.

We resolve that our ethnic and tribal diversity should be a source of our unity, strength and also a source of our economic and social development.

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<sup>1</sup> “Mediating Between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State, Nigeria” by David R. Smock  
<http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pw55.pdf> (pp 17-20)

- 4. PROVOCATION:** We acknowledge the existence of the use of derogatory names toward each other in the past.

We condemn in strong terms the use of derogatory names to each other. We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from this. We resolve to collectively respect and trust each other, and call upon all to refrain from the use of such derogatory names like 'Arna', 'Falak Muut', Jaap nhaat Yelwa, Gampang, etc. as perceived to be derogatory by groups concerned or affected.

We resolve to refrain from the use of the media to cast aspersions and give incorrect and misleading information about our community. We call on the media to always cross check and balance information they publish in relation to our community.

- 5. INTIMIDATION:** We acknowledge and condemn the unruly behavior of our youth due to high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and exploitation of the youth as thugs and hanger on by politicians. We call upon all stakeholders, i.e. religious, community and political leaders, to put hands on deck to reverse this trend.

We also resolve that the use of parallel markets in Yelwa-Nshar and the conversion of houses into market square in Yamini be referred to the local government council.

- 6. INJUSTICE:** We acknowledge and condemn the conversion of residence and places of worship into markets and other uses. Having so observed we are appealing to the parties concerned to in the name of God vacate those places for their rightful owners.

- 7. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)/MISSING PERSONS:** We note with concern that some of our brothers and sisters are still at large having been displaced. We therefore appeal to the authorities to take adequate steps to ensure their return and necessary rehabilitation. We also resolve that a joint search committee be constituted between the local government council, the Shendam traditional council and the law enforcement agents for the search of the missing members of the community.

- 8. GOVERNMENT ROLE ON EVEN DEVELOPMENT:** In view of the prevailing circumstances existing in our community, i.e. the non-functioning government structures and organizations like NITEL, Ministry of Agriculture (M.O.A.), Plateau Agricultural Development Project (P.A.D.P.), Water Board, Electricity, Schools and Primary Health Care (P.H.C.), we passionately call on the government to resuscitate these institutions as they were prior to the crises in the community.

- 9. CONCLUSION:** We resolve to work collectively with the security agencies to maintain law and order in our communities.