

**2nd CONFERENCE BY INTERRELIGIOUS
CONCIL OF UGANDA**

**SEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE
NATIONALRECONCILIATION, JUSTICE
AND PEACE AT ALL LEVELS.**

Facing 2011 with Hope and Constructive Action

Statement by:

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Your Grace the Arch Bishop Luke Orumbi, Religious Leaders, Political Leaders, Traditional Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all I do not belong to that school of thought that religious leaders should not engage or medal in politics whatever that means. Religious leaders are part and parcel of society. When things go well, they benefit, when they go wrong they too pay.

Second, there are no set of people for politicians and another set of people for religious leaders. We are all engaging the same people, and we all fish in the same waters.

Even more interestingly, in the case of Uganda there is no Muslim no Catholic no Church of Uganda etc who has no relative in the other religious denominations. So those who use religion for political survival, if you hurt people, on religious grounds, you are likely to find that your relatives or friends in the other religions are also hurt.

Democracy is not about elections only. What takes place many years before, can influence the elections years later. So what you say, what you do, the gifts you solicit or receive, the guests you welcome or give cold shoulders, eventually affects the atmosphere and out come of elections. Remember what Hadith says you are not a true believer until you do to others what you would wish them to do to you.

Democratic values, and freedom, are never, and can never be granted by an individual. They are never sudden. They are a process, take time and are fought or sweated for. Similarly, they don't just go away suddenly. Like one Law Lord remarked.

“Loss of freedom seldom happens over night. Oppression does not stand on the door steps. It creeps up insidiously; it creeps up step by step and all of a sudden the unfortunate citizens realizes that it has gone”.

There are two areas or practices that appear innocent, but actually tempting and eventually influence what takes place at the election time, however distant.

1st the practice of religious leaders calling upon political leaders to greet people. The congregation had come to worship and were not forewarned. They are a captive audience. What about those people in the audience who

may not be supporters or those who support a politician who worships in another religion? What will happen to politicians of another religious persuasions who don't attend your church or mosque? When will he or she ever greet your people? Are you sure this person came to worship or just greet the people?

When will political leaders ever learn the practice of humility. When will they ever learn that they are not everything every where or when will they ever learn to respect other people's places of importance. What happens when five or so of them are present? My view is that they should separate time to worship from time of politicking. Pray, worship and go away like all other believers. What will happen when things are said that don't please others, especially the "powerful" ones.

I know and confess that I have been and still I am a beneficiary of this practice, but the hallmark of a leader is to reflect, ponder and review what has been happening and chat a better way forward. To error is human but to knowingly repeat the same mistake over and over again is something else, to put it mildly. I am an irregular attendant of All Saints Cathedral, and I praise them for what goes on there in relation to this matter.

My second area is this sudden surge of gifts to the religious leaders. Brethren avoid temptations. I was present when the Grace Bishops Sekananye, Magambo, Kitembo, Katwesigye, Kahigwa and His Grace Bakyenga to mention just a few, were consecrated. There were no car keys and these great men served and still serve well. In fact it was a great event and pleasure to see in some of the cases the believers and some of their friends contributing to make "entandikwa" for their bishop.

Those who went to the bush told us then but no longer now why they went to fight.

1. Elections were rigged. Now we talk of regular elections.
2. African leaders coming into power and refusing to leave. Some even said they want to be out at 55 years to be able to attend to other economic activities.
3. To stop abuse of state resources President Binisa was accused of using state house to issue chits.

If religious bodies are to be assisted by the state, let there be a clear policy on what type of support and facilitation. It should be clearly provided for

and stated in the national budget and accountability is provided for. This is the case with missionary hospitals. You don't have to be over nice to someone for support to be availed. We should build and be proud of our country and its institutions rather than and depend on an individual.

You also avoid a situation where some religious leaders are being seen as favoured or going out of their way to be seen to be nice, at times to the chagrin of their flock. I have seen some leaders religious or political change their demeanor and languages to appeal, to a leader which in it's self could be a sign of humility, courtesy. It is not easy to resist such moves especially in this period of scarcity in the midst of plenty. At this period in time when there are some leaders who are busy stealing and plundering the national treasury and resources, without shame and get praised in some circles as success stories. It is indeed tempting. But leaders are supposed to take hard decisions which in the long ran enhance our respect, integrity, pride, and confidence of those we lead. There is no easy way in building strong institutions and respect for ourselves and the nation. A population that is proud, confident and self respecting is a bed rock for Democracy.

Religious leaders and institutions have played and continue to play a pivotal role in building the moral fibre of our society, in fighting for civil liberties, respect for human rights and have preached clearly against corruption or to put it neatly the stealing and plundering of our national resources as if there is no tomorrow. The fight against Amin's excesses and terror during late Obote's second government by religious leaders is well known and we salute you for a job well done. Your relentless fight against the terrifying and inhuman situation in the north is well known. You have contributed to the return of peace to the whole country. We thank and applaud you. But we should note that peace is not just the absence of war.

I believe that religious leaders have a big role to play in promoting a culture of accountable leaders, time keeping and time management, promotion of high values and to point out where things are not so right, so as to prevent us from going from good to not so good, then to bad and impunity.

This country belongs to all of us and religious leaders have the right and duty to play their part. We thank you for the part you are playing and please continue.

We need a Uganda where all are free to associate. We need and deserve leaders who come and go while still fresh and valued. This is long over due. We need to invest in on educated and highly skilled population to be able to live a decent life by converting our potential wealth and resources into valuable goods and services. A hungry person and illiterate person is bad for democracy.

We need and deserve leaders who are accountable and nobody should be above the law. Our problem has never been that we have bad laws, the main problem has been an abundance of leaders who do not even follow or obey the laws they themselves have enacted including changing constitutions they themselves negotiated or proudly enacted.

History never repeats itself. It is leaders who are so full of themselves, who repeat the same practices and mistakes, and when the obvious results happen, they are too proud to admit their errors and shift the blame to history. They blame History, that history has repeated itself.

Your Grace and distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen thank you for listening to me.