

**A TOWN HALL MEETING FOR GOVERNORSHIP CANDIDATES IN RIVERS
STATE ORGANIZED BY COALITION FOR ISSUE-BASED POLITICS AND GOOD
GOVERNANCE (CIPOGG) ON TUESDAY 3RD APRIL, 2007 AT HOTEL
PRESIDENTIAL , PORT HARCOURT**

**THEME: 2007 AND BEYOND:SETTING THE AGENDA
-A TOWN HALL MEETING**

1.0 **INTRODUCTION:**

The programme started by 9.43am. Mr. Harcourt Wokocha, Master of Ceremony, introduced dignitaries to the High Table

2.0 **OPENING PRAYER**

The Opening Prayer was said by Pastor Bernard Graham Douglas. The National Anthem was taken immediately after the Prayer.

3.0 **WELCOME ADDRESS BY CIPOGG CHAIRMAN:**

The CIPOGG Chairman Mr. AUSTIN Monday, FNIM started his welcome address by saluting and appreciating all who honoured the CIPOGG invitation and urged all governorship candidates present to use the forum to present their manifesto to the people of Rivers State. He appreciated the presence of Senator Francis Ellah, OFR, FNIM who is the Chairman of the Occasion; Ms. Yemisi Ransome-Kuti, a national officer of CIPOGG, who is the Executive Director of Nigeria Network of Non-Government Organizations (NNNGO)

He said CIPOGG organized the programme to improve the policy landscape and to imbed reforms in the political and policy arena with the advent of a new administration. He urged all candidates to play politics of integrity, peaceful co-existence, love and sincerity of purpose

4.0 **OPENING REMARKS:**

Ms. Yemisi Ransome-Kuti , Executive Director, NNNGO and Member, CIPOGG gave the Opening Remarks. In her Remarks, CIPOGG was launched in Lagos on February 5, 2007. The objective of the Launch was to unveil CIPOGG and sensitize the nation on the activities of the Coalition, in view of the current democratic processes to usher in a new government in May, 2007 through the ballot box. CIPOGG- a brain child of the NESG Government and Institution Policy Commission- is a coalition of various stakeholders-including civil society/non-governmental organizations, media, academia, opinion leaders, technocrats and organised private sector-in the Nigeria's electoral process, advocating a more rigorous and issues driven political culture and the Coalition aims to contribute significantly to engaging the emerging political class on discourse on key policy and reform issues

She welcomed everyone especially the Candidates to the programme. She further stated that everyone needs to partner together in order to take Rivers State & Nigeria forward. She said the people have a functional responsibility and so should partner with those in power to be able to implement and monitor the policies that are made. She told the candidates that whatever promises they made here will be used in future

against them if they fail to keep to it. She appreciated the sponsors of the event CIDA, UNDP, DFI and UN and wished the candidates luck.

5.0 **INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNORSHIP CANDIDATES:**

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|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 5.1 | Kelechi Ibimina Onyekwere, Esq . | Progressive People Alliance |
| 5.2 | Chief Sergent Awuse | Democratic Peoples Party |
| 5.3 | Deacon (Arc.) Akuro Parker | United Nigerian Peoples Party |
| 5.4 | Hon. Mgbeonye Wokekoro | Hope Democratic Party |
| 5.5 | Prof. Allswell Osini Muzan | African Democratic Congress |
| 5.6 | Deacon Adonye Omubo-Pepple | Alliance for Democracy |
| 5.7 | Arthur Kalagbor | African Political System |
| 5.8 | Senator Bennet Birabi | All Nigeria Peoples Party |
| 5.9 | Rev. Barr. Innocent Ekwu | Citizens Popular Party |
| 5.10 | Chief Dr. Davies Ibiamu Ikanya | Republican Party of Nigeria |
| 5.11 | Eric Iyango Lazurus | National Solidarity Democratic Party |
| 5.12 | Rev. Ndubuisi Odota | African Renaissance Party |

6.0 **SPEECH:**

Barr. Ayo Adebusoye of Nigerian Network of Non-Governmental Organisations (NNNGO) then gave a speech on Independent Monitoring and Evaluating by Civil Society Organisations. He quoted an Indian adage, “where there is economic prosperity, there’s no need for a leader”. He said Poverty amongst others like vandalisation of pipelines, youth restiveness, unemployment, etc should be properly addressed. He stated that many countries including Nigeria has adopted the MDGs. He said there’s a global partnership between the rich and the not-so-rich and NNNGO has been pushing the interconnectivity between Government and the people. He stated that the reason for the gathering is to initiate this partnership as there must be a change in Rivers State in particular and Nigeria as a whole.

7.0 **GOODWILL MESSAGES**

The representatives of the Commissioner of Police, Rivers State; INEC Commissioners, Rivers State; and Co-ordinator, NAPEP, Rivers State were not available to give their Goodwill Messages as at the time they were being called.

8.0 **PRESENTATION OF THE CORE ISSUES**

The Moderator, Senator Francis Ellah, OFR, FNIM presented the Core Issues for discussion.

In his address, he paid tribute to CIPOGG and the sponsors for the programme. He said the large number of sponsors for the programme demonstrates the large interest of people towards the election. He called on the candidates to show intelligence in what they say and respect constituted laws. He stated that the Core Issues to be discussed are infrastructure; Security- safety-fundamental human rights; Real Sector-Manufacture; Corruption- at one time or the other Nigerian have been ranked as second to the most corrupt country in the world; and that corruption and bribery goes hand-in-hand; Niger Delta - recent cases of abduction; Environment- Oil Pollution, global warming, environment degradation.

Senator Ellah stated that the problem of choosing a democratic government demands special attention in the following areas.

1. The chosen Candidates must recognize he is to ensure peace, order and security of lives Safety of the people should be his highest order
2. There must be justices on which peace, order and good governance can be based. justice does not reside on the judiciary alone. Justices is the essence of democratic culture which must be cultivated.
3. There is no room for experimentation at the Governorship level as such trail and error has caused great harm. Candidates must be able to show dignity.

He said good governance is more than building good road, schools, GSM, etc. All these are important but it is not an essence of good governance. Good governance depends on the highest level of competence.

Senator Francis Ellah advised the candidates to be courageous, vigilant, honest and truthful in order to succeed. He said the candidates would tell the audience individually how they could contribute to build a great State.

9.0 **INTRODUCTION OF LEAD PANELLISTS**

The Panelists were once more introduced. They are

- 9.1 Pastor Bernard Graham Douglas
- 9.2 Gogo Enoch-Isaiah, MD, UNIPORT Investment Ltd
- 9.3 Dr. Alexandra Fi, Director, St. Patrick Hospital, Port Harcourt
- 9.4 Happiness Ebri, Director, Chebri & Sons Resources
- 9.5 Didi FyneCountry
- 9.6 Daisy Okeh

INTRODUCTION OF RAPPORTEURS:

- 9.7 Mrs. Eva Eja
- 9.8 Iyk Orji
- 9.9 Charles Ibe
- 9.10 Godwin Nyodee

THE TOWN HALL MEETING

The Candidates were called in turn in alphabetical order of their Surnames to address the audience for 5 minutes what their plans for Rivers State are if elected Governor of the State

9.11 **SENATOR BENNET BIRABI (ALL NIGERIA PEOPLES PARTY)**

He thanked the organizers. He said he offered himself to run the gubernatorial race for 2 reasons.

1. As a doctor by training, the fundamental training in dealing with problems is to find that cause of the problem. He grew up in this State and has always been asking why the situation of misconception by our leaders has not changed. He said Nigeria is a country not a nation and is made up of about 300 Nation States which are independent. In Rivers State we have about 20 of them which are distinct in culture, way of life, etc. This is what our leaders have failed to understand.
2. He understood the problem of development is been fashioned from outside and imposed on the people and so noting is been achieved.

He promised that if given the mandate to rule all these will change as he will bring positive change to the socio-economic situation of the State.

9.12 **REV. BARR. INNOCENT EKWU (CITIZENS POPULAR PARTY)**

He said he was motivated into Governorship race because of 14 issues, though only 7 were listed out before he ran out of time.

1. Unemployment: According to his research carried out, Rivers state has 1.2m unemployment youths and 40% are graduates.
2. Corruption has devastated Rivers State
3. Abject Poverty
4. Infrastructural decay: According to his recent research, roads wear out within 3 months after construction. So far, 69 roads have been awarded to various contractors and done; they got worn out within 3 months. The 69 roads were also offered thrice.
5. Communal Crises: There has been over 68,000 small arms proliferation. Over 80,000 youth have lost their lives due to village and cult crises
6. Cultism/Violence: He stated that the present insecurity in the State is man-made, and those in power induced it.
7. Poor standard of living.

9.13 **CHIEF DR. DAVID IBIAMU IKANYA (REPUBLICAN PARTY OF NIGERIA)**

Chief David Ikanya said his programme is to ensure peace in River state. He has a programme tagged "Complete Security, Food, Wealth/Power distributed equitably". He said he will run a transparent government that have the fear of God and the maintenance culture and public utility of Rivers state will function. Also, the 23 LGAs, the Governor and his entire Cabinet will be available for questioning; there will be no corrupt officials in his Government. He said he won't drive the youths into the creeks but will provide jobs for them and he will take care of the family by empowering them. Industries will rehabilitated, revenues will be established from the communities, fair opportunities will be given to every part of the State, he will impact on aggressive coastal treatment and there will be free education system in the state.

9.14 **PROF ALLSWELL OSINI MUZAN (AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS)**

Prof. Allswell Osini Muzan believed that a lot of things happening today in the States is due to the failure of the education system. He said the seconds are spoilt, teachers are not well paid, there is no time for education and at the end we have a rotten society. He said everyone is responsible for what is happening in the state. There are no roads, no good drinkable water. He stated that his Government would provide the followings:

1. Citizen Participation: the Citizens will be asked what Government can do for them and also what they can do for the Government as it is a collective responsibility.
2. There will be constant light for 24 hours
3. Health institutions will be re-established
4. Infrastructure will be provided
5. Bribery/Corruption: The basis of our corruption is tribalism, nepotism, etc, and it will be done away with

9.15 **ARTHUR KALAGBOR (AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM)**

He stated that his government would have civil participation, utilize the resources of the State by being prudent in the management of the resources, provide peace and

security and engage the youths through massive job creations. He said he has drawn a master plan for each Local Government Area to employ youths through agriculture

9.16 **ERIC IYANGO LAZARUS (NATIONAL SOLIDARITY DEMOCRATIC PARTY)**

He focused on four (4) basics areas:

1. Agriculture: He will establish mechanised farming taking into compliance basic food supply, opening of markets. He said graduates of Agriculture would be employed. Also agro allied will be achieved.
2. Education: He will bring back the boarding school system and also rehabilitate Government Schools so as to compete favourably with the private schools Welfare packages of teachers will be improved.
3. Health: Health centres will be put in places apart from the hospitals
4. Social Services: These are also very important. There will be constant electricity and water supply

9.17 **BEACON ADONYE OMUBO-PEPPLE (ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY)**

He said he would run an all people's government, which will bring everyone together for peaceful development, and also a one-party system will be introduced in the State. He further stated that he wants to form Rivers State into a world-class example of community development. He said programmes are implemented by leaders that are not utilized, but he will develop the State that all will see the development and he has a 50 years programme in mind that will move Rivers State forward. He said the recent population figure stood at 1.5m, and soon it will increase, he wants to evolve a multi-agricultural programme where about 50% youths can be employed.

9.18 **KELECHI IBIMINA ONYEKWERE, ESQ. (PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE ALLANCE)**

Klechi Onyekwere said his Government would be an issued based one. Infrastructure which is the right of the people will be provided. He will involve other major stakeholders in planning the towns and villages. For security, the police will be redirected, they will work at night to secure lives. Better roads and lightening will be provided to make sure the streets are safe. He stated that Niger Delta was once arms free but PDP Government came into power and provided arms for the youth, and upon assumption of office, jobs will be provided for the youths and their arms taken away.

He said science and technology will be encouraged so as to tackle our development problems. Enough funding will provided in terms of loans, grants , etc in this regard.

For Agriculture, he said he will pursuer a great revolution, fish farming will also be pursued and entrepreneurial training will be given to people. His Government will be accountable to the people and an audited account will be published every month, as a step to fight corruption.

9.19 **DEACON (ARC.) AKURO PARKER (UNITED NIGERIAN PEOPLES PARTY)**

Deacon Parker started by saying that leadership is made by God and the biggest challenge a leader faces is more spiritual than physical. He gave his focal points as:

1. Education: This is mental empowerment. The society is facing a lot of problems because they lack in education and orientation. He said e has a programme that will affect everyone in this regard.
2. Infrastructure: Construct roads in order to make every town accessible. He said micro-transport system would be proposed.
3. Power: There will be constant electricity supply

4. Agriculture: He said there would be mechanized tools for farming, so as to export the farm products.
5. He will make the waterfront very decent
6. Will put a stop to corruption at all level

Deacon Parker ended his speech by saying if he steals the people's money once he enters into power, God should kill him.

9.20 **CHIEF SERGENT AWUSE (DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES PARTY)**

He said his Government would:

1. Provide security to lives and properties because if the issue of security is not properly handled,, every other matter cannot be solved.
2. Embank on good and sufficient agricultural activities. There will be much investment in the area of fishing.
3. Encourage educations by reviving infrastructure in educational sector; scholarship will also be awarded to students.
4. Review whatever is the current energy policy of the State and ensures people have light. He said we have enough resources to revive our v civil services.
5. Health Sector will improve. He said there will be Primary Health Centres , General Hospitals which h will operate at Local Government level and Specialty Hospitals which will operate at the State level.
6. Empower indigenes of the State. Most jobs/contracts will be given to indigenes.
7. To check restiveness in youths, he will make sure Oil Companies in the State employs youths of the State.
8. He won't run the Government alone, as power will be delegated to various government functionaries toe ensure success and achievement.

9.21 **HON.MGBEONYE WOKEKORO (HOPE DEMOCRATIC PARTY)**

He gave his focus points as follows:

1. Vision: Progress in the State has been intelligently planned. He has a master plan to that effect
2. Infrastructure: Drainages, roads and sewage systems will be built and clean drinkable water will be provided for the people.
3. Everyone will be involved for successes and change to be achieved. Hw will invest in agriculture .
4. His government is one of accountability and transparency and there will be equity in distribution of State amenities
5. Corruption, which is caused by inequality, and deceit, will be eradicated

9.22 **REV. NDUBUISI ODOTA (AFRICAN RENAISSANACE PARTY)**

Rev. Ndubuisi Odota Promised to decongest Rivers State especially Port Harcourt main town if given the mandate to rule. He said he would fight corruption from the grassroots and provide employment for the youths. Citizens of the State that are 760 years and above will be provided a Care centre. He further stated that his Government would embark on Agricultural Revolution, as attention will be shifted from oil. He also promised peace and security to the citizens.

10.0 **QUESTIONS/RESPONSES:**

QUESTIONS

After the debate, the audience was given the opportunity to ask the governorship Candidates of their choice questions what they just said. The Moderator insisted that all questions must be asked first before the candidates respond.

- 10.1 Hon. William Ikine asked the first questions and he directed his question to the AD candidates, Deacon Adonye Omubo-Pepple. He asked how the AD Candidate intends bringing the youths out of the creeks give them jobs since these boys have seen money in large quantity in the creeks.
 - 10.2 Emmanuel Emenike also asked the AD candidate, he said once he is given the mandate to rule, he will introduce a 1 –party system. Is he saying he will scrap out all other parties apart from AD?
 - 10.3 Chief Hon. J.P Onyibo directed his question to Rev. Ndubuisi Odoto but said the question is also meant for all the Candidates. He asked why all the Candidates did not include the Memorandum of Understanding in their article. Is it because they don't want to help the people especially at the rural level?
 - 10.4 Tammy Abiski wanted Chief Awuse to say what he intends to do with women because he did not mention them in his speech.
 - 10.5 Abel Jacob asked Chief David Ikanya to tell the people the magic he will use as to create massive agriculture. To Chief Sergent Awuse of DPP, he asked what the social welfare of the handicap would be like, since none of them spoke on it.
 - 10.6 Silas Poubo asked Deacon Akuro Parker to give Rivers State the assurance that he has his approval from God to run for the position of Governorship.
 - 10.7 Pepple Adiari asked Ibiama how he intends to carry out the help he is promising to the family unit.
 - 10.8 Clinton Jaja directed his question to Chief Awuse. He said Awuse spoke of free education and in Rivers State we don't have many authors. What would he do to encourage writers to publish their work for the reason of education?
 - 10.9 William Black asked Chief David Ikanya what use will it make if boarding schools are brought back as he intends doing?
 - 10.10 Chief Chike Wikekoro asked Awuse why the Governors bear 'Executive' before 'governors' He said under the Parliamentary System we had ceremonial Governors/Presidents like Nnamdi Azikiwe. So when the Presidential System was introduced, they attached the 'Executive' to make sure people don't mistake it to be ceremonial appointments.
 - 10.11 Abel Coker directed his question to Prof. Allswell Osini Muzan. He said he has listened to all the speakers and none spoke about the environment especially the industrial environment. How will he tackle the issue?
- The panelists were given the opportunity to throw their questions to the Candidates.
- 10.12 Dr. Alexandra Fi asked Chief Awuse about his plans to handle tuberculosis. Deacon A Parker was asked how he would combat corruption.
 - 10.13 Happiness Ebri asked Onyekwere how he has prepared himself to pre-plan the towns and which step has he taken as flag off to do that. For Chief Awuse, he asked if his Government would be interested in resource control.
 - 10.14 Pastor Bernard Graham Douglas asked Rev. Barr. INNOCENT Ekwu how he intends to solve the problems he stated out. To Chief Lazarus he wanted to know how he'll

present 3 square meal with the present revenue. For Kelechi he asked how he would go about the neighbourhood police he intends setting and how he will help farmers to achieve his agriculture revolution. He asked Wokekoro his master plans in solving all the issues he stated.

- 10.15 Gogo Enoch-Isaiah asked Chief Ikanya to explain to the participants his so much talked about environment. On transparency he asked him how the account of the State would be. For Chief Awuse he asked him how he would address the issue of youth restiveness and chieftaincy crises in Local Government Areas. He stated that Chief Lazarus talked about agriculture revolution for the 23 LGAs of Rivers State, he should tell the participants how he would do it. For Deacon A. Parker, he asked him how many things he'll deliver within his first 24 months in office and what the people should do to him if he fails to deliver them.

The Executive Director of NNNGO and Member of CIPOGG, Ms. Yemisi Ransome-Kuti said everyone needed to understand the backdrop of the responses expected from the Gubernatorial Candidates. We need to know that Oil will not be around forever; already the developed world is looking for an alternative to oil. She stated that when the candidates are responding they must look at what they can do to solve the problems of the State.

The Moderator, Senator Ellah talked about performance of Local Government and Civil Service. He said the standards are not the same compared to what it was in the past. He said civil services is the key to development of any Government and if we let the civil service get destroyed, the society will be in great danger. He ended by saying of the service rules are kept, Civil service will improve.

Responses

The Candidates were given 5 seconds to respond to their questions. Though the time was not enough as some candidates had more questions than others, they were able to do justices to the questions. They responded in alphabetical order of their Surnames.

10.16 **CHIEF SERGENT AWUSE (DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES PARTY)**

He said he believes the issue of gender in Nigeria is taking a new dimension as women are now taking up prominent roles and places in the society. He said his Government would encourage women to do better in whatever thing they choose to do. For the welfare of the handicap, he said deliberate steps have been taken to make sure those who are less privileged are well taken care of. Indigenous writers will also be encouraged to publish their works. For the Executive nature of Government that encourages corruption, he said it is because they don't delegate responsibilities to their deputies, commissioners and other officers. In his Government everyone would be assigned duties to carry out. He further said regarding environment, Nigeria has law regulating company's control but such laws are not obeyed. He stated that no company will be too big for his administration to control and that Government will also invest their money on these companies to show they are also part of it. .

10.17 **REV BARR. INNOCENT EKWU (CITIZENS POPULAR PARTY)**

He said he has a master plan to deal with all the problems he stated. His first days in Office he would employ staff. He said current appraisal shows that there are 45,000 existing vacancies in Rivers State. He will lift full embargo on employment in the State. He will talk with consultants of dead companies to see how they can be revived. Corruption will be taken care of, as his Government will practice

transparency. 90 days in office, he will set up a Commission to train youths in the State.

11.18 CHIEF DR. DAVID IBIAMU IKANYA (REPUBLICAN PARTY OF NIGERIA)

He stated that he would bring back dead companies like PAN and NAFCON. Recognise the right of every child, widow, women and girls to good living, Empower the family. Go back to the days when the streets of Port Harcourt was clean which gave it the name "Garden City", He'll make sure there's no more youth restiveness by partnering with the youths. He said Government will have control over all schools whether private or Government. The Government schools will be upgraded to compete with the private schools and the fees of the private schools will be monitored. Will be transparent in awarding contracts and in the distribution of amenities. Our chiefs will be brought back and due respect accorded them.

11.19 ARTHUR KAIAGBOR (AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM)

On Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Kalagbor said he cannot talk much on it due to the brief time given to speakers, but a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement between the oil companies and their host communities. He said government plays a role in drafting MOUs. He said if his Government comes into power, he will first of all collect all MOUs for a proper study and then will assure equity.

12.0 ERIC IYANGO LAZARUS (NATIONAL SOLIDARITY DEMOCRATIC PARTY)

He said people have left agriculture for oil, he wants to bring back agriculture that is why he is introducing mechanised fanning. For it to be successful, it must have both private sector and Government participation.

12.1 PROF. OSINI MUZAN (AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS)

Prof. Muzan responded that his Government will address environment properly and he would not play lip service type of government like the previous Governments. He said oil is a blessing from God to us but because Government had been negligent; it has

Turned into a curse. He said taxes would also be brought back.

12.2 DEACON (ARC.) AKURO PARKER (UNITED NIGERIAN PEOPLES PARTY)

He said he got confirmation from God and God also told people (witnesses) to inform him to run the race of Governorship, He responded that he will operate a very transparent Government, and just like he said before, if he steals Government money, God should kill him.

12.3 PRESENTATION OF THE FINAL STATEMENT OF THE TOWN HALL MEETING:

The panelists presented the final statement to the House. It was read by Dr. Alexandra Fi as follows:

Due to time constraints, candidates did not have the opportunity to thoroughly direct the issues. However, there was obvious zeal in addressing the present issues.

12.4 INFRASTRUCTURE.

The Panel is of the opinion that the candidates should be able to present a concrete time line with specific plans to improve infrastructure.

12.5 REAL SECTOR

There is an acknowledgement that the real sector is in comatose; few of the candidates in response actually had good plans in resuscitating that sector.

12.6 SECURITY

An obvious hot bullet issue properly addressed by all candidates.

12.7 CORRUPTION

There was the us 113 I sanctimonious declaration of commitment to the eradication of corruption. However, a plan seal seem yet to be seen/heard.

12.8 NIGER DELTA

There is an agreement that there is insecurity and environmental degradation and youth restiveness. The old structures that border on customs and values have to be revisited for effectiveness.

12.9 THE ENVIRONMENT

Half of the candidates addressed the issue. Few of them adequately addressed the environmental issues.

12.10 CLOSING REMARK:

The Moderator, Senator Francis Ellah gave the closing remark. He thanked everyone that participated in the event especially the Governorship Candidates. He also appreciated the participants for their cultured behaviour during the meeting. He thanked CIPOGG for organising such important event and the Joint Donor Basket Fund

- Canadian International Development Agency, Department for International Development, European Union and the United Nations Development Programme for sponsoring the Programme.

12.11 Refreshment was served to all present.

12.12 VOTE OF THANKS:

Mr. Daniel Jumbo, Member of Rivers State Steering Committee, CIPOGG did the Vote of Thanks. He expressed the gratitude of the Council and Members of Coalition for Issue-Based Politics and Good Governance (CIPOGG) to all who participated in the Town Hall Meeting. He wished the Candidates success in the forthcoming election and asked God to grant all safe journey back to their destinations.

12.13 CLOSING PRAYER:

The Town Hall Meeting for Governorship Candidates in Rivers State ended by 2.25pm

With prayer by-one of the Governorship Candidates