

MKU'S INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEACE, SECURITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

It's time we reflected on the cost of war

By Caroline Mwendwa

“If you doubt the cost of war, ask the Congolese and the Rwandese ... in fact go no further than our own Pokot and Turkana,” said a candid Professor PLO Lumumba during the International Conference on Peace, Security and Social Enterprise, hosted recently by Mount Kenya University (MKU).

The conference that put into perspective, various contexts of destructed peace, and the aftermath of war as well as assembling views of delegates from different countries took place for three days. Its main agenda being to sensitise Kenyans on the need to promote peace right from the individual level to the national level especially as the General Elections draw closer.

Speaking during the event, the CS, internal security and coordination of national government, Hon Joseph Nkaisery observed: “This forum is timely because the idea of engaging in dialogue on peaceful interventions for sustainable development in the contemporary society and especially in Kenya today cannot be gainsaid. Because peace and security are central requirements for social and economic development as well as effective governance, the integration of peace, security and social enterprise as the agenda of discussion during this conference is highly commendable.” He further said that the creation of social enterprises through innovation, creativity and mentorship opportunities particularly by institutions of higher learning will provide a barricade against conflict and war especially among the youth. “Social enterprise is a vital driving force in the growth of any economy hence the reason behind the Government of Kenya’s commitment towards youth empowerment in the Vision 2030 economic blueprint. I commend Mount Kenya University and the partnering organizations for making this conference possible.”

Among other key speakers in the historic event were: the National Cohesion and Integration Commission chairman, Hon Francis Ole Kaparo, the director of The Kenya School of Law, Prof PLO Lumumba



Chief guests Hon. Joseph Nkaisery, Prof Simon Gicharu, H.E. Eng. James Kimonyo, Hon Francis Ole Kaparo and Dr. Ann Adkins hold doves to symbolise peace outside the conference hall.

and Rwanda’s High Commissioner to Kenya, H.E. Eng. James Kimonyo.

Prof Lumumba in particular appealed to the media to be responsible as they can be propagators of conflict through biased reporting or irresponsible coverage. The need to be conscious when communicating using social media was also highlighted. “When sending messages in whatever platform, people should not feel protected by anonymity because when the ramifications of those messages start to hit, neither the sender nor the receivers will be set apart, all will be victims of loss of life, property and security,” observed Prof Lumumba. Eng Kimonyo on the other hand reiterated this message giving the example of the Rwandan genocide which exterminated close to 2 million people within three months. “The genocide did not just happen, it grew in stages from insightful images and messages to mental division and the actual physical division of citizens.”

The delegates gave speeches on preventive measures of conflict. One of them, Dr. Ann Adkins, assistant Professor of Education, Clarke University observed: “Right from a young age, values of peace can be inculcated in children by engaging them in peace resolution activities and exposing them to service learning where

they reflect on the needs of the society and what role they can play to meet them.” This she said will lay a strong foundation for a peaceful future.

In the same breath, Prof Simon Gicharu, the founder and chairman of MKU said: “Billions of money are spent in solving conflicts but if this colossal amount was directed to enterprise development, more youths would be employed.” Being an entrepreneur, Prof Gicharu said he has experienced the brunt of war and would like to contribute in advocating for peace. “The 2007 post-election violence wounded our institution badly. A good number of students did not resume school probably due to the ethnic animosity that ensued then, while others lost their parents to the mayhem and had to be sponsored for their education. This goes to show the adverse effects war can have on a country’s peace.” The conference was no doubt instrumental to his endeavour of advocating for peace. He further promised to commit Kshs. 5 million to replenishing the concept of Nyumba Kumi which he vouched would be of great impact in maintaining peaceful relationships among citizens. “As entrepreneurs, we should count profits in terms of the number of lives transformed for the better as a result of our investment,” he concluded.