

MEMOIRS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE
5TH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL IN PRAISE OF THE GREAT PERSONS OF MT. PAEKU

“GATHERING 2017 - PRAISE TO THE GREAT PERSONS OF MT. PAEKU”

HELD IN PYONGYANG AND MT. PAEKU, 12TH AUGUST 2017 - 17TH AUGUST 2017

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HEAD OF THE NIGERIAN DELEGATION TO
“GATHERING 2017 - PRAISE TO THE GREAT PERSONS OF MT. PAEKU”

I want to commence my memoirs by expressing sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency, JONG YONG CHOL, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and members of the Embassy Staff for their friendship, support, assistance and guidance, which made my work easier and made the trip of the Nigerian delegation wholesome, memorable and very enjoyable. Many thanks to my dear and worthy friends and comrades at the embassy.

I also want to thank the members of the Nigerian delegation for their friendship and support to the people and government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, ably demonstrated by the joyous and whole-hearted participation in the 5th International Festival in Praise of the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu, and in your sacrifices made in resources and time to celebrate the great socialist cause of the Paektusan nation, and learn of the noble culture of the Korean people. Many thanks to you, my fellow Nigerian comrades.

The team of five delegates left Abuja, the Capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Tuesday afternoon, 8th of August 2017. We boarded EgyptAir flight via Cairo, Egypt to Beijing, the Capital of the Republic of China, from where we transited by rail to Pyongyang, the Capital of the DPRK. It took us 18 hours travel time from Nigeria to China and another 23 hours by rail from Beijing, China to Pyongyang, DPR Korea. We arrived Beijing on Wednesday afternoon, 9th of August 2017 and then proceeded to Pyongyang after a night sleepover in Beijing. We arrived Pyongyang on Friday afternoon, 11th of August 2017.

Although, the journey was a long and extended one, it was quite enjoyable. The train ride through the countryside of northeast Asia was quite remarkable and scenic. The rolling landscape tells the story of the ancient and the modern. Particularly fascinating, is the final leg of our journey through the countryside of the DPR Korea. The serenity, tranquility, simplicity and friendliness of the Korean people stand out in stark contrast to the chaotic rush and bustle of the Chinese side.

The entire landscape of the Korean countryside is lined with planned agricultural farmlands on both sides of the rail route as far as the eyes can see. You begin to get the sense of the diligence and hard work that has formed the Korean people into the frontline global socialist bulwark against western imperialism; well able to counter, survive and thrive against the inhuman international sanctions imposed on this peace-loving people by the imperialist powers and globalist oppressors at the behest of the United States of America.

The sight I saw is amazing; a people completely focused to develop self-sufficiency in their ability to feed themselves, educate themselves, house themselves, modernize their health

and technology infrastructures, and nurture their socialist democracy free from external influence and interference.

As I watched field after field of farmlands of various kinds and different yields roll past, miles after miles of the train ride, I couldn't help but wonder why other developing nations, particularly in Africa, fail to draw from this experience to fight and win the battle against pervasive hunger and abject poverty of our suffering masses; and in so-doing, lay the groundwork for true independence of the continent as opposed to the current neo-colonialist status of black African nations under the economic and social stranglehold of colonial era imperialists and their modern day stooge regimes; continually plundering our collective resources while serving poverty, starvation and death to the once proud owners of the continent.

I couldn't help but wonder if this is not the model that could start a truly masses-based, people-oriented socialist revolution that will lead our various impoverished nations in Africa to self-sufficiency in our economies, in our industries, our politics, our states and our common defense. I still can't help but wonder to this day.

In my judgment, the people, the party and the government of the DPR Korea understand that the real foundation of a self-reliant nation is a self-reliant people; and that the first step to self-reliance is for a people to feed themselves. This is an amazing experiment, which I saw rolling past, landscape after landscape, field after field. I began to understand what has kept the Paektusan people above board; what has kept them strong, resilient, enduring and victorious while other wealthier, bigger and more powerful socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union and China, caved under the pressure, impunity and sanctions of the mighty western powers. Yet the Korean people survived it all and through it all has become a strong socialist power that no country would dare attempt to trample on or intimidate.

Then, we rolled into Pyongyang to behold a city of impeccable urban planning. As the train moved through the city, one can't help but notice its superb streets and road networks, the wonderfully arrayed architecture of high rises, glowing urban infrastructure and a serene welcoming city. It truly felt like home away from home.

At the train station, our delegation was welcomed by officials of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, DPR Korea. Ko Myong Hun, Vice-Chair, Korea-Nigeria Friendship Society and Director, Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was there in person to receive us, accompanied by Kim Jong Nam, a staff of the Committee who had lived in Nigeria in the recent past. We assembled for a welcome group photo that incidentally was published in the National Media. We were assigned vehicles

and interpreter-guides and then driven to a government guest house prepared for the Nigerian delegation for a much-needed rest in lieu of the events of the festival. The next few days would be hectic, we were told.

Saturday, 12th August 2017 - I participated in the consultative meeting of the heads of delegation, which took place at the Conference Hall of Yanggakdo International Hotel. I was honored with a seat at the high table. The meeting set the pace for the festival and adopted the flow of events for the next five days. It was the only event of the day and took place in the early evening hours from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM.

The 5th International Festival in Praise of the Great Persons of Mount Paektu (IFPGPP) was a global event that hosted representatives from sixty-six countries drawn from various parts of the world; Asia-Pacific nations, Europe, Africa, Americas, as well as countries from the Oceanic region and the Arab region in the middle east. Specifically, delegates were drawn from the following countries:

Australia	Egypt	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Austria	Ethiopia	Libya	Slovenia
Bangladesh	Finland	Malaysia	South Africa
Barbados	France	Malta	Spain
Belarus	Germany	Mexico	Sri Lanka
Belgium	Guinea	Mongol	Sweden
Benin	Haiti	Myanmar	Switzerland
Brazil	Hungary	Nepal	Syria
Bulgaria	Iceland	New Zealand	Tanzania
Cambodia	India	Nigeria	Thailand
Costa Rica	Indonesia	Norway	Tunisia
Cuba	Iran	Pakistan	Uganda
Cyprus	Ireland	Peru	UK
Czech	Italy	Philippines	Ukraine
D. R. Congo	Japan	Poland	Venezuela
Denmark	Jordan	Romania	-
Ecuador	Kuwait	Russia	-

The delegates consisted of diplomats, progressive political parties and associations, past and present government officials and dignitaries from various nations, progressive civic groups, various Korean friendship and solidarity movements all over the world, etc. The festival was hosted by the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, DPR Korea.

Sunday, 13th August 2017 - This was an eventful day, consisting of four very important ceremonies and an air travel from Pyongyang to Samjiyon, in the Paektusan region. The day started with a morning ceremony at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun and a visit to Mangyongdae, the birthplace of President **KIM IL SUNG**, the founding father of the Republic.

At the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, the delegates paid homage to the Great Persons of Mount Paektu; His Excellency, Generalissimo **KIM IL SUNG**, the Eternal President of the DPR Korea, the founder of Workers' Party of Korea and the founding father of the socialist Republic, and His Excellency Leader **KIM JONG IL**, the Eternal General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and the Eternal Chairman of the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; as both men, great and globally admired, lay in state in dignity.

In the Palace, the delegates were guided through many sections of the complex that held memorabilia of the great works of the great persons and countless gifts, awards and presents from foreign leaders, dignitaries, political parties and various other groups and persons over the many years that the collective efforts of the two great leaders led the world's progressive countries and movements from glorious victories to even more glorious victories. The compilations exhibited at the Palace of the Sun will remain an undying tribute to the great accomplishments of the two most memorable great persons and will always represent their selfless and eternal contribution to the struggle of man on earth for freedom against the forces of oppression and imperialism, age after age. They are a wonderful sight to behold.

At Mangyongdae, the delegates were led to the birthplace of President **KIM IL SUNG**, the founding father of DPR Korea. The birthplace shows a humble beginning, born and raised by poor peasants. The story is told of his patriotism at a very young age that led the young man to take up arms against the imperialistic Empire of Japan, which, at the time, colonized, exploited, oppressed and pulverized a helpless Korean nation. It is amazing that someone from such a poor and humble background could rise to lead the revolutionary wars that victoriously defeated the imperialists empires and their legions of occupation and oppression; then set about to lay the groundwork for the Juche-Songun ideology that has catapulted the socialist state of Korea to the foremost defender of progressive values all over the world; a strong and powerful nation well able to defend itself against the massive array of hostile military might that the imperialist nations has mustered against it; a nation today capable of deploying the H-Bomb as well as the ICBM rockets to match the military prowess of the world's super powers.

Listening to the story of the birth and rise of President **KIM IL SUNG** from grass to grace is enough to instill hope in those of us who fight to liberate our nations from the evil clutches of imperialists and their neo-colonialist agents masquerading as leaders all over Africa and beyond. We look forward to our own similar miracle in not too distant future.

By the time the morning ceremonies were over, it was already after noon. We had to hurry to the International Airport in Pyongyang for the one-hour flight out of the capital city to Samjiyon on our first leg to the region of Mt. Paektu. The flight was good and serene. The delegates were well attended to by the Captain and his flight crew.

Our first port of call upon arrival to the Samjiyon area was the Samjiyon Grand Monument. The monument is set on a roll of mountainous area not far from the Samjiyon Airport. We were met at the airport by numerous buses specially built for the rugged mountainous climbs and descent of the region. The delegates were sorted out group by group, country by country. Our Nigerian delegation shared transportation with delegates from Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba, among others. It was a memorable company to be with for the entire duration of our stay in the Samjiyon and Mt. Paektu areas.

Following the ceremony at the Samjiyon Grand Monument, the delegates were driven to the nearby Pegaebong Hotel, where we received general briefing on the Mt. Paektu area and were entertained by different groups in the local cultural dances, art and display original to the region. We were told stories of the exploits of the revolutionary forces at the inception of the revolutionary war of freedom, when they faced an overwhelming imperial Japanese occupation army. The Japanese Imperial Army was, at the time, a world super power, large and capable to have defeated the Chinese and the Russian armies in separate wars to take complete control of the Korean Peninsula for many years. Yet, the army of peasants that President **KIM IL SUNG** assembled in this region of Mt. Paektu were able to withstand such a great superpower of the time by dint of self-courage and their collective conviction on the righteousness of their cause; the fight for their freedom. This army of peasants, very poorly equipped, ragtag, not enough food, water or warmth for the fighters, ended up defeating the imperial Japanese army of occupation; driving them completely out of the Peninsula. To hear the locals tell their story is to be inspired at what a few can do under the right leadership, the right doctrine and the right cause. The evening ended with spectacular performances from various children, young adults, musical dance groups and bands. It was a day to remember and a night to celebrate. What a great culture! What a great unique people!

Monday, 14th August 2017 – Today was another full day and we started early. First was the gathering of the delegates at Mt. Paektu to greet the Sun. Second was the visit to the

Paektusan Secret Camp where His Excellency, Leader Kim Jong Il was born during the anti-imperialism resistance war.

The ascent to the peak of Mt. Paektu was spectacular and breathtaking. Doing so in the early hours of the morning, right about the sunrise, was quite exhilarating. Mt. Paektu is not just a single mountain as the name may imply, but a very large span of mountainous region with numerous intertwined networks of mountains and valleys rolling over and into one another, large and small. From higher ground to higher ground, the mountains collectively rise up to the heavens, culminating into its peak over two kilometers high. At the very tip sits a most amazing serene glassy lake emitting colors that replicate the deep blue sky. Mt. Paektu is a sight better seen than described. It is nearly impossible to capture this majestic and awesome gift of nature in writing or imagery. One must see to really know. It is a most wonderful sight to behold.

The people of Korea hold Mt. Paektu in great awe and reverence. The people are ancestrally rooted in the ruggedness, history and beauty of this mountain. The mountain has provided covering, shelter, defense and nurturing to the paektusan people from generations to generations; and will continue to do so in the generations of the future. This is where the heart and will of the people were forged into the collective strength that withstood the imperial army of the all-conquering Empire of Japan.

To understand how great this accomplishment was, one should consider the ruthlessness of the Japanese imperial military that easily trounced both China and Russia rather quickly to become the undisputed colonialist of the Korean Peninsula and the extended Asia-Pacific region. This was the state of affairs when young **KIM IL SUNG** began to mold the hearts and wills of the Paektusan people into the invincible liberation movement in various secret camps scattered within the region protected by Mt. Paektu. Although mere humans, they drew courage from the protection of the towering mountains. As the mountain towers over all, the fighters, though in their hundreds, towered over the thousands and millions of the Japanese occupation forces leading to ultimate victory of the fatherland. This is Mt. Paektu and what it represents to the Korean people.

Tiny, winding concrete road snakes around the mountainous region in its journey to the top. The road is constructed on the rocky surface of the mountain, which is a great feat of civil construction. Wedged barriers line up the sides of the road, designed to guide motorists and to provide protection against any mishap. The road and barriers are white washed for the most part and this presents a spectacular snaking white strip against the natural colors of land, rock, and vegetation. The journey to the top of Mt. Paektu is an experience worth reliving many times over. The terrain is a gift to mountain climbers.

Sometimes, my eyes wandered away from the beauty of the mountains and their natural marriage to the rising Sun. In those times, looking back the snaking white trail slopping downwards, surrounded both ways by deep rugged and rocky valleys, I get some uneasy feelings of a possible free-fall. Not a good thought, I assure you. But the men who handled the special duty buses along this mountain trail are pros. They and their buses are made for this line of work. I look at our driver, calm and collected behind the wheel, then remind myself that he has been doing this for many years. The trick always worked to calm my nerves throughout the upward journey and twisting climbs.

Alas, we made it to the peak of Mt. Paektu. The journey took over two hours motoring up through the mountains. We had probably more than 50 heavy duty buses all parked neatly beside the rest house situated on top of the mountain. The lake itself is a sight to behold. The air and elevation, breathtaking! It was surprisingly warm up there. We had been warned to dress up for wintry conditions at the peak, but this was a special day for many of us delegates. The Sun agreed. There were no clouds at the peak where we were. However, the rolls of mountains far away can be seen folding up into the clouds. I felt like a man standing on a filament above the clouds, and it felt good.

The ceremony started in earnest. The delegates were hosted by top officials of the Worker's Party of Korea, led the Vice Chairman of the Party.

Delegates took turns to shower praise on the Great Persons of Mouth Paektu; His Excellency, President **KIM IL SUNG** and His Excellency Leader **KIM JONG IL**. Tributes were paid to the patriotic revolutionary fighters who immortalized the spirit and outcome of Mt. Paektu; who sacrificed all, including life and family, for the freedom of their countrymen and women. These were the people we ascended the mountain to celebrate today. Their courage and tenacity are the reason why the march of colonization and imperialism was turned back; why we remain free today to challenge modern day imperialists. They gave their lives not just for the Paektusan people, but also for the rest of us in far-away countries who assembled at the mountain peak to draw inspiration for our own battles of freedom and independence.

At the end of the speeches, banners were signed and raised in recognition of the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu. It was now time for the long descent back.

The delegates proceeded to the Paektusan Secret Camp. This was the hideout of the anti-Japanese revolutionary army led by Generalissimo **KIM IL SUNG**, from where the brave soldiers launched military actions against the imperialistic army of occupation. This was also the location that Leader **KIM JONG IL** was born. We were escorted through different areas of the camp by the guards who lectured the delegates on the various memorabilia

and places of interests, such as the exact hut where Generalissimo **KIM IL SUNG** lived with his wife, which is also the birthplace of Leader **KIM JONG IL**. The tour through the Paektusan Secret Camp provided me with first hand glimpse of the tough conditions of daily living for the freedom fighters and the courage of the comrades who endured such tough and dangerous living for the good of their fellow countrymen and women.

That same afternoon, we departed the Paektusan region on our trip back to Pyongyang. The entire visit to this region is a journey to the glorious past of the founding of the Paektusan nation and a reminder that good will always overcome evil.

Tuesday, 15th August 2017 – Today’s events included a morning ceremony at the People’s Palace of Culture. This was the main conference of the event; “Gathering 2017 – Praise to the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu”. The event hall was filled to capacity with dignitaries, both domestic and foreign. It was chaired by the Honorary Chairpersons, Kim Ki Nam, Vice Chairman, Central Committee of the Worker’s Party of Korea and Madhav Kumar Nepal, Former Premier of Nepal; and supported by many Co-chairpersons, such as anti-Japanese Heroine, Comrade Kim Jong Suk, Chairwoman, Korean Committee for Solidarity with the World People and Chairwoman, DPRK Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. I was also honored with a seat on the high table as a Co-chairperson of the event.

The conference took off well and ended superbly. It featured a military band and orchestra that supported the event with various national tunes including the national anthem of DPR Korea, played ever so skillfully.

There were many speeches in praise of the immortal works and achievements of the Great Persons, Their Excellencies Comrade **KIM IL SUNG** and Comrade **KIM JONG IL**.

There were also numerous speeches enumerating the achievements of socialist Korea and in support of the nation’s fight at the forefront of upholding the banner of Juche-Songun victories over the global efforts of imperialistic nations to frustrate the struggle for true independence of developing nations worldwide; in their evil plot to enslave the rest of us.

There was various presentation of gifts as well from the delegates all over the world. The gifts were symbolic of the various tenets of the struggles and victories of DPRK under the wise guidance of the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu. It was a very long line of presentations, one after the other. There were just too many gifts and presented with much love, zeal and adoration of the feats accomplished by the people and government of DPR Korea.

The entire deliberations at the conference were captured in a communique issued in the form of a letter to the Supreme Leader, His Excellency **KIM JONG UN**, Chairman of the Worker's Party of Korea, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of DPR Korea, and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army.

In the letter, which I was honored to read on behalf of the participants of the 5th International Festival in Praise of the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu, which was addressed to the Supreme Leader, His Excellency **KIM JONG UN**, the delegates expressed our common view to continually uphold the Great Persons of Mt. Paektu as the sun of humanity and to achieve the global independence.

We noted that their Excellencies, **KIM IL SUNG** and **KIM JONG IL** are enjoying boundless reverence and admiration of all people as they, possessed with unrivalled wisdom, outstanding leadership art and the noblest virtue, laid the solid foundation for freedom and prosperity of Korea and rendered service to the cause of global independence.

We also noted that His Excellency, Supreme Leader **KIM JONG UN** has radically increased the overall national strength and firmly safeguarded the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and the rest of the world and has therefore won the admiration of the international community as the most outstanding statesman and military strategist of the century.

We also noted in the letter that the progressive peoples are immensely encouraged by the great works of His Excellency, Supreme Leader **KIM JONG UN** who has miraculously increased the strength of the great Paektusan nation by dint of self-development and has steered the world politics under the banner of independence and Songun.

The letter, which fully incapsulated the ideals of the conference, emphatically noted that the delegates have entrusted the bright future to His Excellency **KIM JONG UN**, the great sun of the 21st century, and called on him to continue in his efforts to build a just and peaceful new world.

It was a great message that drew a long and lengthy standing ovation. With it the conference was declared closed. The remaining days were spent in award conferment ceremonies, banquets, solidarity meetings, sporting and sight-seeing events.

I was greatly humbled with the honor of the ORDER OF FRIENDSHIP award conferred on me as part of the activities to honor the heads of the delegations from various nations all over the world. The event, which took place at the People's Assembly, crowned the gracious hospitality of the Korean people towards us and cemented the iron-clad

friendship between the peoples of our two nations. This gesture will remain a high point in my lifetime, for it greatly strengthened and invigorated in me the undying spirit of love and friendship towards my friends and comrades in the Peninsula; so far away, beyond many seas and oceans, yet so close to my heart, work and purpose.

There were three solidarity meetings that left a great impression on me. One was the meeting between the heads of the delegations and the President of the Presidium. We discussed matters of mutual concerns and cooperation at the meeting and took a group photo.

The other was the bilateral meeting between our delegation from Nigeria, Peoples Progressive Party and the Worker's Party of Korea. The meeting took place at the headquarters of the Worker's Party of Korea. Officials of our party were led by myself while the Vice Chairman led the officials of the Worker's Party of Korea. In the meeting, which lasted longer than scheduled, the two parties discussed bilateral issues and mutual strengthening of ties and friendship between our two parties and our two countries. Proposals for political cooperation were discussed and it was agreed that we should do all that is necessary to further develop and actualize the proposals.

The third meeting is an immediate, most impressive and rewarding outcome of the bilateral meeting between Peoples Progressive Party of Nigeria and the Worker's Party of Korea. It was the follow-up meeting between our delegation and officials of WPK's Party School. The need for the meeting sprung from our discussions on the mechanisms of establishing, building and nurturing lasting and enduring party structures and the inculcation of ideological loyalty to our party leaders in Nigeria. We wanted to learn and to benefit from the experiences of the profound successes of the Worker's Party of Korea in this regard. We received great words of advice and wisdom from the Vice Chairman and the Central Committee Members of the Worker's Party of Korea in the meeting; and to obtain even more field information, the Vice Chairman was very kind to arrange a meeting between us and the officials of the WPK Party School in Pyongyang at such short notice.

The meeting between our delegation and officials of the Party School took place on Thursday, 17th August 2017 at the People's Assembly. There, we met with a Professor and the head of the school. The discussions that ensued culminated in our decision to establish PPP Party School of Ideology and Administration in Nigeria as the main vehicle to drive party loyalty and ideological commitment amongst officials of our party. This will be the first time in Nigeria that such a party based proactively ideological institution would come into existence. It is probably going to be the most rewarding outcome of our visit to the DPR Korea when we look at the totality of outcomes sometime in the future. Many thanks to the Vice Chairman and the Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea for making

this very rewarding experience possible. Many thanks also to the officials of the Pyongyang Party School for their superb tutoring of our delegation. We will never forget this special act of true friendship and comradeship.

The winding down events progressed through Wednesday, 16th August 2017 and Thursday, 17th August 2017 terminating with the visit to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation Museum and the Joint Friendship Gathering at the Sports Village, Chongchun Street.

Delegates began their departure from the country on Friday, 18th August 2017. Our delegate departed Pyongyang on the Saturday, 19th August 2017 on our way back to Nigeria through Beijing, China.

Overall, this was a great experience for me. It was my second time visiting DPR Korea, the first being the Arirang Festival of 2013 that took place 7th - 13th September. However, this time around, I was able to see more of the country and to interact with a much wider range of people across the country. This time, I was able to see the countryside, enjoy its serenity and peace-loving people, and appreciate the progress made in the republic by dint of the will and self-development efforts of the masses. This is good governance, where the wellbeing and the welfare of the people take precedence over all; where the public interests take precedence over personal interests. It is the type of masses-based, people-oriented government that we hope to replicate here in Nigeria and in Africa in the nearest future.

My impression is one of a great nation of humble but great people. Citizens who cherish the sacrifices made by their fathers, mothers, relatives and compatriots who fought and died to win their much-cherished freedoms. I found the people of DPR Korea to be the friendliest people in all my travels to many countries across Africa, Europe, North America and Asia. Koreans are the most hospitable people one can imagine, and most dependable as well. It is my hope to be able to visit again and again to consolidate our mutual friendship. I also hope to work out arrangements in the nearest future to enable us invite various individuals and groups from DPR Korea to Nigeria for various mutual socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic activities. It is my undying hope that through these mutual mechanisms, we will be able to solidify the bond we have developed and make it unbreakable.

Signed:

Comrade Damian Ogbonna

National Chairman, Peoples Progressive Party of Nigeria

Chairman, African Committee for Friendship and Solidarity with the Korean People