

*Building Bridges  
through Interfaith Dialogue and  
Youth Participation*

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## Opening Context

[Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba](#)



**This conference is going to be different** than every other kind of conference we've been having. So immediately the starting is also very different.

You know, the normal thing is to call all the big people to the high table, and then we begin to present all the welcoming addresses and the speeches.

One thing we've decided to do with this conference is to leave all our titles and degrees, and whatever we carry, outside the door so that we can get into the conference hall as equals.

We know we are trying to do Dialogue. So if we don't come into the conference as equals Dialogue is not going to be easy. Because if we hear this person being called professor this, or doctor this, and you do not have such a title, psychologically it will affect you to think: "This person knows more than I do. So whatever I am saying that person has known it all and well."

So we will leave all the titles. Please don't be offended if we do not address you with all the big titles and degrees. We want to be equal. I hope that makes it clear. So I'm starting.

Let's learn how to do things differently for the first time. I will make a very brief welcome address from the heart and not from the paper. Then I will introduce one or two persons, and then we go into the other issues. I will just put down a few points here.

**In the world today**, we are being told by those who know that HIV/AIDS is among the leading causes of death in the world. I think they say it is number four, and the most dangerous and common cause of death in West Africa.

I disagree with that. I think research has not been completed.

All over the world today human beings are suffering from another deadly virus which is killing more than HIV/AIDS. And I call that **Human Relationship-Deficiency Virus (HRV)**.

It is killing more than anything, because that virus leads to what I call **Acute Intentional Devastation of Society (AIDS)** – that disease.

You know we talk about HIV leading to AIDS. So this Human Relationship-Deficiency Virus (HRD) also leads to another form of AIDS – Acute Intentional Devastation of Societies.

**HRV → AIDS**

**Human Relationship-Deficiency Virus → Acute Intentional Devastation of Society**

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It is also the common cause of bombs, kidnappings, hatred. Whatever we are seeing in the world today is as a result of this virus, what some experts call "poverty of relationship". It is because we do not have good human relationships that societies are broken down.

**I think it is high time we develop a new kind of science.**

We have made so much progress in advancing science and technology – space technology. We have a lot of people in space. We have a lot of people on the moon. And some people are even trying to go to the sun now.

So our problem is not science and technology.

But if we begin to look at another kind of science now, let us look toward the time when our universities would begin to produce graduates and professors of **Human Relations**.

I know we have psychology in universities, but I think that is not enough. There should be an emphasis on what we call Human Relations. I think if that area is developed properly, our society will become better.

This virus that I'm talking about cannot be cured by the normal ways we know. This virus cannot be cured by a nuclear bomb. It cannot be cured by throwing a bomb wherever they are thrown and for whatever reasons.

**The only way we can cure this virus is through sustainable dialogue, heart-to-heart communication, and citizens' collaboration.**

And I believe that is the reason why we are gathered here. We are gathered here to begin to define a new way of living that can improve societies and make human life better.

So I invite each one of you this weekend to be very, very open and ready to learn and share what you have.

I always say this that every human being in this world is like a bottle that is half full and half empty.

The empty part of the bottle represents those things that you need in your life which you don't have; but other people have them.

And the half full bottle represents all the talents, the abilities, and peace that the Creator has so graciously given and deposited.

So each one of us of course, sitting here today, has something to offer as well as something to receive from someone else. So we have to be very open.

Just present yourself innocently, assuming you don't know anything and are ready to know.

I think in that way by the time we get out of here on Sunday, each one of us will be going back home better than we came.

That is my prayer. That is my dream for the coming days.