

NGA to partner NYCN for youth employment

By Ruth Byoma

The Director General of the National Gallery of Art (NGA), Mr Abdullahi Muku, has expressed his desire to partner with the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) to create employment for teeming Nigerian youth. He was speaking while receiving the “Icon of Youth Development & Social Services” award bestowed on him by NYCN on April 9, 2018 in Abuja.

Muku said the purpose of the partnership will be to leverage on some programmes of NGA which are youth focused with a view to creating jobs for young Nigerians. These include the Saturday Art Club, where children and young adults are taught Art, explaining that some grandaunts of the programme have already set up their own studios and employing others; the National Visual Art Competition and Artfair, which take place in different geo-geographical zones of Nigeria among others.

The DG explained that Nigeria for so long depended on oil as source of sustenance but that that is no longer tenable. He explained that creating employment for the youth through the art sector is feasible because many countries depend on culture, tourism and art as strong contributors to their economy. To prove his point on how lucrative the arts can be, he cited the recent sale of a painting by Ben Enwonwu for a record breaking 1.2 million Pounds! (Ben Enwonwu’s masterpiece ‘Tutu’ was sold in February this year at an African art auction held at Bonhams, London).

Muku believes that if the enabling environment is created, the arts can thrive in Nigeria and Nigerian youth will not have to depend solely on the government for employment. He said this is the reason most of NGA’s programmes are targeted at the youth. He explained that NGA has recorded successes in some of its youth aimed programmes.

The president of the NYCN, Amb Murtala Mohammed Garba, represented by the Secretary-General, Mr Lateef Salaam Oladimeji, commended the DG for his service to Nigerians and noted that he has made significant contributions to the development of Nigerian youth. He stated that the NYCN is open to partnerships that will bring to fruition meaningful projects for the benefit of Nigerian youth, expressing his delight on the desire of NGA to partner with the NYCN.

In receiving the award, the DG expressed his appreciation for being honoured by the Nigerian youth who make up a vast majority of the country's population. He stressed that his achievements in the NGA were not only due to his efforts but with the collaboration and support of the management and the entire staff of NGA. He assured the NYCN that the award will spur him and the entire staff of the NGA to do more.

Present at the event were some of the executive members of the NYCN and senior management staff of NGA.