

Skin Cancer: Shagari Makes Case for Albinos

From Mohammed Aminu in Sokoto, 07.13.2010

Second Republic President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, yesterday challenged the Federal Government to initiate policies and programmes that will support albinos who have skin cancer and to prevent many more from being affected.

He also attributed much of the discrimination and neglect suffered by over two million albinos in Nigeria to ignorance on the part of the general public.

Speaking at the 4th national conference on Albinism held in Sokoto yesterday, Shagari stressed the need to engage government and other stakeholders in ways that bring out the required policies that will change the situation and challenges being faced by albinos in the country. Shagari's call came on a day the Minister of Health, Prof. Onyebuchi Chukwu, restated Federal Government's determination to address the challenges faced by albinos in the country, adding that the era when skin cancer is allowed to progress to an advanced state is gone.

Speaking at the Conference, Chukwu noted that the plight of albinos is a major concern and government had resolved to ensure adequate prevention and treatment of all forms of cancer in order not to allow it to progress to an advanced stage. He said it was in response to the plight of albinos that the Presidential Task Force on Albinism was inaugurated and has the responsibility of implementing short and long term strategies of addressing these challenges.

The former president had noted that albinos have suffered untold neglect and discrimination over the years due to ignorance on the part of the general public, saying ignorance before now pervaded policy and pragmatic areas as much was not done to create opportunity for policy space for albinos.

Shagari maintained that appropriate information removes the veil of ignorance and misconceptions about albinism, a first step towards addressing discrimination and giving albinos psychological freedom.

He emphasised that it is important that we continue to see a coalition of efforts like this that will yield social dividends for the people which is one of the practical approaches for addressing social problems.

In his remarks, Founder of the Albino Foundation, Mr. Jake Epelle, said albinos are dying in large numbers due to skin cancer and stressed the need for urgent help to stem the ugly trend. He stated that the best and most preventive way of avoiding skin cancer is for albinos to stay sun safe and from undue exposure to the sun.

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