



BRIEFING ON THE TANZANIA CHRISTIAN & MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS' CONFERENCE

WHITE SANDS HOTEL AND RESORT, DAR ES SALAAM

6th – 9th OCTOBER 2014



1.0 Introduction

PROCMURA in collaboration with Baraza Kuu la Waislamu Tanzania (BAKWATA – the umbrella body of Muslims in Tanzania); Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC); Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) and the Council of Pentecostal Churches in Tanzania (CPCT) organised a 4 day (6th to 9th October 2014) national Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Conference in Dar es Salaam.

The focus of the conference was to promote peace within Tanzania and peaceful co-existence between and among adherents of these two largest religious groups in the country. Recent past and current happenings in the country, indicated that something had to be done to promote religious and societal tolerance and acceptance of religious and political differences, and live with such differences in peace.

It may be appropriate to state that Tanzania as a nation that prides itself with the legacy of Ujamaa, a political philosophy propounded by the country's first president Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, that advocated for "Unity", "Oneness", "uniting with country men and women as one extended family" definitely faces challenges to live up to that philosophy. The challenges (among others) show itself in a growing religious intolerance in some parts of the country; the politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics is a national concern, and intractable disagreements on national constitutional making which continued to rage on. These and others urged PROCMURA, its partners, and stakeholders in mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, to seek a platform whereby the two largest religious grouping in the country would meet and come up with a roadmap to promote peace and peaceful co-existence.

2.0 Planning and reviewing together

The implementation committee made up of representatives of PROCMURA, CCT, BAKWATA, TEC, PCT and Zanzibar Interfaith Centre (ZANZIC) met a day before the



The Conference Implementation Team

commencement of the conference to review the architecture of the conference and also assign duties to individuals. The committee also made it a duty to meet each day to evaluate the climate of the proceedings and address any emerging issues.



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah in his address turns round to stress a point to the President while Sheikh Othman Isa translates into Swahili at opening ceremony

3.0 Opening Ceremony and Dinner

The conference began with the opening ceremony and dinner with H. E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Ambassadors from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Iran, Turkey and Germany also attended the opening ceremony. The European Union representative for Tanzania, the UNDP representative, and other mission and development agencies were also in attendance.

During the opening ceremony, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, the General Adviser of PROCMURA, addressed the conference. Dr. Mbillah's address focused on constructive engagement between Christians and Muslims for peace and peaceful coexistence in the country. He called on the president and the religious leaders to do all that they can to eschew politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics which he argued, contributed immensely to violent conflicts. He entreated the president as an important head of state and government within the African Union, to carry this message to his co-heads of states in Africa since the politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics was a rising dangerous trend in some parts of the continent.

The General Adviser concluded by appealing to the Ambassadors of the various countries present, and the European Union representative to entreat their governments and institutions to think globally when they act locally. He argued that 'a global world required a global action' since negative local actions in any given country can have global implications.

The President of Tanzania in his address to the August gathering commended PROCMURA and expressed profound admiration of Dr. Mbillah's challenging speech. He severally repeated the politico-ideological statement made by the General Adviser on the politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics and called on all to take that caution



The President of Tanzania, H. E. Jakaya M. Kikwete making his remarks



Some of the dignitaries and diplomats present at the opening ceremony

seriously. He recounted the peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in the country and argued that this could not be taken for granted, it has to be worked on. He lamented the growing politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics in the country and cautioned all and sundry to desist from that and help build a Tanzania on the principle of *Ujamaa*. He assured the General Adviser that he would convey the message to his colleague African leaders. He expressed agreement that in no way should politics be religionised and religion politicised if Africa has to move forward.

The President concluded by calling on all stakeholders to avoid politics of bitterness and use religious platforms to promote peace and peaceful co-existence. He pleaded with religious leaders to avoid politicians who come with selfish agendas in order to seek their solidarity.

The diplomats who were present during the conference expressed delight at the focus of the conference and assured the religious communities and political class of their governments' readiness to partner and engage in collaborative initiatives for the peace of Tanzania. The Norwegian Ambassador who addressed the gathering reiterated the determination and commitment of her government and by extension the international community to ensure that Tanzania has peace and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims.

4.0 Reasoning together for Peace and Peaceful coexistence

Conference begins in earnest

Ninety eight (98) Christian and Muslim religious leaders from Zanzibar and seven (7) other regions of mainland Tanzania gathered at the above named hotel to engage in intra-faith and inter-faith conversation on how to work towards peace and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Tanzania.



Group photo of delegates at the conference

In order to do this effectively a model was evolved whereby Christians and Muslim met in separate groups to have intra-faith discussions on emerging issues that militate against peace and peaceful co-existence and to meet together as Christians and Muslims to share their findings and map out the way forward. The intra-faith group reports which were exhaustively discussed in the joint plenary, formed the basis of a joint statement which was issued during a press conference held on the last day of the proceedings. The situational reports also guided the drafting of the regional action plans for Zanzibar and the seven (7) other regions identified.

5.0 Planning Together

The regions designing the action plans

On the last day of the conference, Zanzibar and the regions of Dar es Salaam, Mtwara, Arusha, Mwanza, Geita, Mbeya and Morogoro met separately and presented their action plans at plenary for adoption. It was unanimously adopted as the way forward that will enable the outcome of the conference to have a multiplier effect.

6.0 Making Our United Voice Heard

Representatives of Christian and Muslim leaders addressing the press

Shortly before the closing ceremony, a press conference was convened to present the agreed joint statement of the Christian and Muslim religious leaders. Present at the press conference were around ten (10) electronic and print media agencies.

Accompanying this interim brief is a copy of the joint statement that was issued.



Archbishop Ruwaichi, Catholic Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, middle flanked by Sheikh Soraga, Secretary General of the Mufti of Zanzibar to the left and Grand Imam of Zanzibar to the right addressing the press conference.



Conclusion

We in PROCMURA, our co-organisers in Tanzania as well as the participants at the conference were excited by the outcome of the conference and more especially, the commitment of the religious leaders to strongly work together for the peace of the land. The participants departed highly motivated and enthusiastic about the regional conferences that are yet to take place. The post activity evaluation forms filled by the participants conveyed their individual and collective commitment to work together as religious people for the cause of peace and peaceful coexistence in Tanzania and beyond. PROCMURA and the other stakeholders/collaborators made commitments to keep track of the implementation of the regional plans to ensure that lessons learnt during the national conference are appropriately transmitted to the grassroots for broad impact.

As we await a comprehensive report of the conference, we would like to very sincerely thank the following partners who provided finances for the organisation of the conference: Danmission, Mission 21, North German Lutheran Church, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Tanzanian and Royal Danish Embassy in Tanzania.

Prepared by the PROCMURA Team



PHOTO GALLERY