



Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
Programme des Relations Islamo-Chrétiennes en Afrique



Lomé Consultation Briefing

“Think, Plan and Work for Peace”



Introduction

The quest for sustainable peace and prevention of violent conflicts in the world of today cannot be traded for anything else, but be pursued vigorously. The search for peace and violent-free society must be sustained and intensified for a better world for all humankind and the environment. It was this quest that served as a spring board for PROCMURA to continue in its work for the realisation of peace that will create conducive environment for sustainable development in West Africa sub-region in particular and Africa at large. PROCMURA recognises the fact that peace is being threatened by the surge in religious radicalisation, violent extremism and transnational crimes, but we have remained resolute in our efforts towards building bridges of friendship across board, bringing healing and restoring broken relationships.



PROCMURA understands that Africa is a continent of religious people adhering to different religious belief systems. Even though, Christianity and Islam form the majority of religious following. The two religious entities are often reminded to intentionally cooperate and collaborate for peace in the wider African society and peaceful coexistence between adherents of the religions. When the adherents of these two monotheistic religions live peaceful among themselves, their strength to prevent violent conflicts and quell radicalism and violent extremism waxes. It is this shared understanding that has continued to motivate PROCMURA to widen and deepen its work for peace and peaceful coexistence among Christians and Muslims in Africa.

The foregoing understanding informed the decision to convene a consultation of this nature, where Christian and Muslim religious leaders from Benin, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the host country Togo to come together, think, reflect, agree, synergise and design country-focused plan of action to prevent violent conflicts from occurring and entrench a culture of peace for the well-being of the sub-region and beyond.

All the participants arrived on 24th August 2015 and departed on 28th August 2015 as scheduled.

Consultation Declared Open



Rt. Rev. Dr. Nathan Idrissu Samwini chairing the opening ceremony



Mrs. Lantana Abdullahi

Prior to the business sessions of the consultation, a colourful opening ceremony took place organised by the PROCMURA Area Committee of Togo with the guidance of the Central Office. The opening ceremony was chaired by the Methodist Bishop of Northern Ghana, Rt. Rev. Dr. Nathan Idrissu Samwini with support from Mrs. Lantana Abdullahi, a well known grassroots mobiliser and peace practitioner in northern Nigeria. Other dignitaries that graced the ceremony include two officials from the government of Togo, both represented the Ministers of Security and Civil Protection, and Interior, Local Affairs and Decentralisation respectively, the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Togo, Rev. Elie Ndjekoronnde, the Vice President of Muslim Union of Togo, Imam Abdullateef Mako, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Special Envoy to West and Central Africa, Rev. Dr. Simon Dossou, the General Secretary of CEVAA, Rev Dr Celestine Kiki, official participants from the seven (7) countries, invited guests and pressmen. There were special musical performances by Kekeli Christian choir and Muslim choir. History has it that this was the first time that during a consultation of this kind organised by PROCMURA that Muslim and Christian choir groups performed calling on Muslims, Christians and indeed all humankind to “Walk the Talk on Peace”. The messages conveyed in the many songs sang were loud and clear on the importance to



Christian Choir



Muslim Choir

embrace and live out the ideals of sustainable peace. Apparently, the two main religions in Togo, Christianity and Islam were well represented during the start-up ceremony.

The chairperson of the occasion in his opening remarks reminded the audience of the timeliness of this consultation and the need to use the time for self introspection as religious people and to further assert our roles in the survival of our individual countries and the sub-region as a whole.

He thereafter invited the PROCMURA Area Adviser for Togo, Rev. Dr. Komi D. Adraké to



Rev. Dr. Komi D. Adraké

officially welcome guests and religious leaders who came as participants to the consultation. Dr. Adraké in his welcome speech highlighted the significance of the consultation, wherein he called on participants to brace-up for transparent conversation while mapping for deeper engagement for the cause of sustainable peace in the West Africa sub-region and Africa at large.

During the ceremony, the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah delivered a speech that focused on the religiousness of Africa and its people. He strongly opposed and dispelled the notion that religion is the problem of Africa and therefore must be gotten rid off. He rather argued that religion has been manipulated by very selfish religious and political leaders in order to achieve their greedy agenda. He warned that the good precepts of religion should be translated into good practice as we live daily as people of faith. He concluded by calling on governments and politicians to avoid dragging religion into moody waters of politics but take good religious teachings to heart in their governance roles and politicking.



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah addressing participants at the opening ceremony



Rev. Dr. Simon Dossou

Special addresses and goodwill messages were received from the Vice President of Muslim Union of Togo, Imam Abdullateef Mako, AACC Special Envoy, Rev. Dr. Simon Dossou, Secretary General of Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West



Imam Abdullateef Mako

Africa (FECCIWA), Rev. Dr. Tolbert Jalla, General Secretary of CEVAA, Rev. Dr. Célestin Kiki, and the representative of the powerful voice of the women, Mrs. Lantana Abdullahi who called on all stakeholders, state and non-state actors to

ensure that the principles of inclusive participation and representation are upheld in all matters, and more importantly in efforts aimed at preventing violent conflicts and building peace.

The consultation was officially declared open after a brief speech of admonition and



Rev. Dr. Tolbert Jalla



Rev. Dr. Célestin Kiki



Rev. Elie Ndjekornonde

encouragement by the President of the Christian Council of Togo, who was represented by the General Secretary of the Council, Rev. Elie Ndjekornonde.

“To experience sustainable peace as a community of people, we must deliberately think, strategise and work together”

Consulting Together as People of Faith



The business that brought together respected Christian and Muslim religious leaders, women and youth from the seven (7) West African countries began with a presentation on the rationale of the consultation which was made by the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah. The presentation unveiled the very essence of the consultation, which summarily was to create a safe but potent platform for Christian and Muslim religious leaders with the active

participation of women and youths to reflect and put in place realistic mechanism that will stifle the tides of religious radicalisation, radicalism and violent extremism in their respective countries and the sub-region as a whole.



It is a task that all hands must be on deck because such activities have threatened the peace and socio-political wellness of the sub-region. He concluded by saying that religious leaders must openly reject and oppose any form of negative solidarity, reject in totality importation and exportation conflict, and must proactively condemn actions that suggest religionisation of politics and politicisation of religion.

Reflecting and Discussing in Groups

Having been challenged by the presentation on the rationale of the consultation, participants engaged each other in small groups on the issues raised. The main issues that guided their reflections and discussions were negative solidarity, importation and exportation of conflicts, religionisation of politics and politicisation of religion.

Listening to the Neighbour



The seven (7) countries represented at the consultation each made separate presentation on current situation of Christian-Muslim relations, manifestation of religious extremism and radicalisation, factors militating against sustainable peace and development, and lastly, examples of local initiatives aimed at building bridges, bringing healing and sustaining peace. Participants listened with rapt attention and keen interest as each country made their presentation. It was truly

a moment of active listening with demonstrated empathy.

Understanding Complex Characters in Peacemaking Processes

It is a common understanding that people exhibit different characters and respond to conflict situations differently. A presentation on different kinds of characters that typifies selected animals to convey a message of human behaviours in conflict prevention and transformation was presented by Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah. Understanding the characters will be helpful in mediation and peacemaking processes. It will enable the mediators and parties involved to handle each individual in a respectable way, thereby de-escalate the conflict and eventually bring reconciliation.

Analysing together as a unique religious entity

The two main religions, Christianity and Islam both preach temporal and eternal peace for humanity and the adherents are obligated to work for peace and live peacefully with their neighbours. The participants went into intra-faith group discussions, Christians in their group and Muslims in theirs too. Each group did an analysis of “what can religious leaders do to eradicate radicalisation and religious extremism?” The feedback received at the plenary was insightful and instructive.

Reasoning together on Culture of Peace

In recognition of the pivotal roles that female and male humankind have towards entrenching and deepening culture of peace, participants went into their distinctive groups, female and male separately to reason on traits that constitute and actions that sustain a culture of peace. Participants reasoned and defined the way of peace that should be embraced as a



culture that enriches human relations beyond religious and cultural boundaries.

Thinking and strategising together for PEACE

The need to generate action plan as a potent tool to keep participants in check for greater multiplier effects cannot be overlooked. It was this understanding that motivated the participants from each of the countries to develop their country-based action plans. The action plans as shared by each country demonstrated the participants' deep quest for peace that is underpinned by justice, fairness, inequality, equity and respect for human dignity.

Making a loud CALL and expressing our COMMITMENT

Towards the closing of the consultation, a communiqué tagged "The Lomé Communiqué" was issued. It serves as an unrelenting call to governments, regional body – ECOWAS, religious leaders, women, youths and all people of goodwill to embrace a culture of sustainable and vigorously work for its realisation and sustenance. State and non-state actors all have a role to play. The religious leaders pledged their commitment to this noble cause of entrenching ideals of peace and peaceful coexistence.



Reading of the final communiqué

Conclusion

PROCMURA appreciates the various roles played by all stakeholders towards the successful holding of the sub-regional consultation in Lomé, Togo. The religious leaders, women and youths that took part expressed gratitude while demonstrating high sense of commitment to live out the ideals of living in peace with the neighbour giving due respect to the neighbour's religious persuasion. Participants openly condemned manipulation of religion to achieve selfish interests. Keeping track of the implementation of the country-level action plans is a task that will be kept to ensure that greater impacts are felt at the grassroots.

Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel
Programme Officer

On behalf of the PROCMURA team



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