

ANGLOPHONE WEST AFRICA REGIONAL TRAINING OF TRAINERS' WORKSHOP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF (FoRB).

30TH November-1ST December 2021.

COMMUNIQUE/STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

We, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, experts and consultants from the Anglophone West African Countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, in a hybrid (virtual and physical) meeting concurrently across the sub region from the 30th November to 1st December 2021, under the auspices of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), and within the framework of the regional Training of Trainers workshop on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB); having been vigorously taken through the following topics:

- Introduction to FoRB
- Christian Faith Perspective of FoRB
- Muslim Faith Perspective of FoRB
- Country Group Works: and Situational Analysis on FoRB and Case Studies
- FoRB as A Human Right
- Skills in Promoting FoRB
- Constructive Christian-Muslim Relations; a Substantive Mechanism for the Promotion of FoRB
- Towards Increased FoRB for Women
- Government as an indispensable Institution in Promoting FoRB for all

Having reflected on the peculiar situation of our sub-region with regard to FoRB while taking into account what is happening in other parts of Africa and the world at large;

Having worked together in country groups with in-depth situational analysis enriched by specific examples from other countries on how we, as religious leaders, can address the issues and promote FoRB;

Having learnt that Freedom of Religion means many religions working together for peace and peaceful co-existence, respecting differences within and between religions;

Having understood and accepted that the FoRB is a fundamental right for every human being and that every human being has the right to have, choose, change and practice his/her belief without being censored;

Well informed and appreciated that freedom of religious manifestation and practice must be regulated (if need be) by law and guaranteed by legal instruments for the promotion of human rights;

Conscious of the fact that, FoRB is part of the overall goal of PROCMURA, to see an African continent where religious freedom and all that it entails become the norm and not the exception;

Convinced that the world in general and African countries in particular can only live in peace and promote peaceful co-existence through respect and promotion of FoRB;

Deeply concerned that failure to accept FoRB can further lead to more radicalisation and violent extremism which already has created enough mayhem within the West Africa sub-region;

Acknowledge that, despite positive development in Christian-Muslim relations in the West Africa sub-region, much work remains to be done both by Religious Leaders and the State in promoting and practising FoRB;

WE the Religious Leaders do hereby pledge and reaffirm our willingness, determination and commitment to remain in solidarity with one another and collaborate with the Governments of our respective countries to work tirelessly for the promotion of FoRB for peace in the sub-region and beyond and by that contribute to peace in Africa and in the world;

As Religious Leaders from West Africa representing millions of followers we do hereby commit ourselves:

- To encourage and promote mutual respect for religious values, beliefs and practices;
- To live and practice FoRB in our daily lives
- To fight against extremism and religious radicalisation through the promotion of FoRB in our respective countries;
- To fight intolerance through the promotion of Christian-Muslim constructive relations;
- To encourage and develop meetings of Christian and Muslim leaders to be proactive in the defence of FoRB and together condemn the abuses and deviations within our religions and our respective countries.

WE THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS DO MAKE A SOLEMN APPEAL TO THE RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS OF OUR COUNTRIES AS WELL AS TO ALL POLITICAL DECISION-MAKERS:

To recognise FoRB within the religio-cultural framework of Africa as a universal human right and to guarantee it through legal instruments for the protection of the rights of all.

To appeal to religious leaders in the fight against extremism and radicalisation;

To guarantee the complementarity of the State with religions and to develop a permanent dialogue with religious leaders within the framework of the FoRB;

To respect the principle of neutrality and non-interference of the State in religious affairs by refraining from the politicisation or the exploitation of religion for political gains;

To establish an effective and inclusive mechanism to combat terrorism radicalisation and violent extremism emanating from intra and / interreligious intolerance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- We express our gratitude to the respective governments of the participating countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Gambia) for creating the requisite technological environment which enhanced this hybrid workshop;
- Our thanks go to the Area Committees of PROCMURA in the sub-region for having accepted to host this workshop and to the whole religious communities of the sub-region for welcoming the idea of the PROCMURA FoRB TOT.
- We very sincerely acknowledge PROCMURA Central Office, who in collaboration with her partners sponsored the FoRB programme and the development of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa within the framework of FoRB.

Done today, 1st December 2021, across the respective participating Countries.

Signed

The Participants.