

Africa Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Conference on Peace and Development



Participants pose for a group photograph

Without a doubt the era where Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders took a back seat on the here and now, and completely distanced themselves from the wellbeing of adherents of Christianity and Islam, relegating their concerns to the hereafter is far gone. The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCURA) conscious not only in building relationships between Christians and Muslims, but also concern for the holistic development of the human person and society, after much consultation saw it fit to organise a Pan-African Conference for Christian and Muslim religious leaders to address these two vital issues. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between the 8th and 13th of January 2012, PROCURA together with the support partners from Denmark: Danmission, Mission Afrika and the Danish Evangelical Mission materialised this long, hard journey.

The success of the conference is not for us to say but for the works that the sixty (60) Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders from eight (8) African countries: Cameroon,

Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar) will carry out in their individual countries.

The theme of the conference “Africa Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders for Peace and Development” was both



Dignitaries present for the opening ceremony stand up in show of respect for the opening prayers.

timely and relevant to the contemporary situation of the African continent. As Addis Ababa welcomed the participants representing the different regions of Africa in the most cordial manner, it set the tone for the interactions that kicked off on the 9th of January 2012 with an opening ceremony befitting the occasion. The opening ceremony was

graced by: *Sheikh Umar Idris*; Mufti of Addis Ababa, *His Eminence Abune Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel*; Archbishop of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, *Rev. Dr. Waqseyoum Iddosa*; President Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, *Rev. Ibyishaka Rose-Marie*; Vice Chairperson of PROCMURA (East & Southern Africa) and Coordinator of the Women and Family Desk of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, *Most Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah*; All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Vice President (West Africa), *Sheikh Dr. Khalid Abubakar Aliyu*; Secretary General Jama’tu Nasril Islam (JNI), the umbrella body of all Muslim organisations in northern Nigeria, *Rev. Arngeir Langas*; Coordinator for Christian-Muslim Relations for Mission Afrika, *Mr. Filipe Alimo Faruma*; Policy Officer, NGOs and Economic Development of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate-African Union (AU) and *Rev. Iteffa Gobena*; AACC Ecumenical Envoy to the African Union (AU), immediate past Chairperson of PROCMURA and immediate past President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.



Mr. Filipe Faruma



Rev. Iteffa Gobena

The dignitaries proceeded to give brief messages on the conference focus and elaborated on the importance of Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders getting more involved in the agenda of peace and development of the continent.

The conference saw various presentations from the eight (8) countries on the state of Christian-Muslim Relations and the Challenges and Prospects for Collaboration for Peace and Development.



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah

Chairman of the Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone and a Commissioner of the Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA).

The country presentations, special papers and group presentations sparked off much discussions on what needs to be done to lead the continent in a direction that reflects the religiosity of African peoples.

The conclusion of the conference culminated in the issuing of a Communiqué that reflected the aspirations, motivations and commitment of the Christian and Muslim religious leaders present. The key issue had been the peace and development of the continent and it was no surprise that the participants drafted a statement to address the prevailing situation of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. The statement read in part that Christians and Muslim religious leaders were cognisant of the happenings in Nigeria and were together united in condemning any kind of violence and distraction of properties worse still when such is carried out in the name of religion.

The Communiqué and full text of the Statement can be read at the end of this brief.



Mss. Abeer Saady Hassan

These were followed by specific presentations on Religion and Development given by **Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah**; General Adviser PROCMURA, Religion and Media by **Mss. Abeer Saady Hassan**; A journalist at the **Al Akhbar** Newspaper (Egypt) and the Unique Role of Religion in Civil Society by **Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh**, a veteran in PROCMURA's work who is currently the



Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh



Participants pose inside the new African Union (AU) building

In addition, the sessions also included a visit to the Orthodox Church and the Mosque in Addis Ababa. The crown jewel though, was a visit to the new African Union building where prayers were offered in anticipation of the 18th Summit of the African Union.

<http://www.procmura-prica.org/Addis-Communiqué-en.pdf>