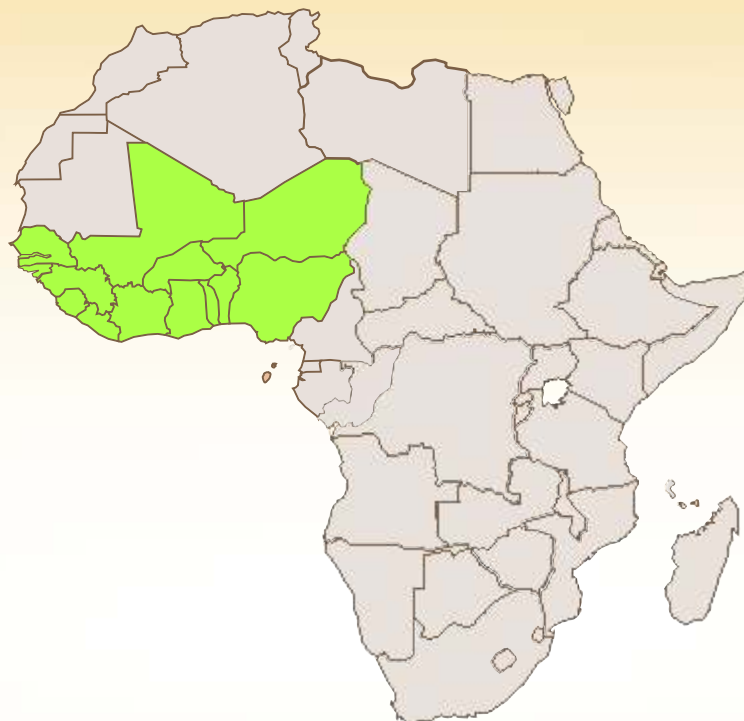


# Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)



## **Christians and Muslims Quest for Peace**

**Report on proceedings of the PROCMURA Conference on Religion,  
Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in West Africa  
M-PLAZA HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA 20-24 JULY 2009**

**Recorded by: Robert Mwanyumba  
and St-John York**

**Edited by: Johnson A. Mbillah**

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# **REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS OF THE PROCMURA CONFERENCE ON RELIGION, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING IN WEST AFRICA**

**M-PLAZA HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA**

**JULY 21-24, 2009**



## **CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS QUEST FOR PEACE**

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*Report on proceedings of the PROCMURA Conference on Religion,  
Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding In West Africa*

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# Abbreviations

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AA	Area Adviser
AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ACRL	Africa Council of Religious Leaders
ATR	African Traditional Religion(s)
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CCSL	Christian Council of Sierra Leone
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FECCIWA	Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa
GACC	Ghana Anti-Corruption Commission
GCC	Gambia Christian Council
GOL	Government of Liberia
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFMC	Inter-Faith Mediation Committee
IRCL	Inter-religious Council of Liberia
IRCSL	Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone
LCC	Liberian Council of Churches
LINSU	Liberian National Students Union
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
PRICA	Programme des Relations Islamo-Chrétiennes en Afrique
PROCMURA	Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOL	United Nations Office in Liberia
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Peace and Security
WAIRCCC	West Africa Inter-Religious Councils Coordinating Committee
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRP	World Conference on Religion for Peace

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# Preface

PROCMURA's determination for Christians and Muslims in Africa to work together as the major religious grouping in the continent to bring about conflict prevention through peacebuilding and ensure that they become proactive in the prevention of violent conflicts took it to West Africa. In the Ghanaian capital city of Accra, PROCMURA brought together 64 Christian and Muslim religious leaders drawn from Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Togo and staff from Kenya to deliberate on issues of peace in the West African sub-region.

The Accra Conference which took place from 21 to 24 July 2009, was a replica of a similar conference for Eastern Africa which took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 2 to 5 September 2008. The documentation of the Accra conference in its detailed form is aimed at providing readers, activists for peace and the general public with a document that will provide insight into the causes of conflict in the region, the forms that it takes to become protracted. It is also meant to provide information on how religious leaders plan to engage governments and civil society to mitigate conflicts and take measures to prevent such conflicts as was experienced in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire from recurring in the region.

The proceedings delved into the role of religious leaders in identifying root causes of conflict and sharing together ways and means by which they can be more proactive in mitigating and forestalling conflict. In the same breathe as the East African peace conference, during the organisation of the West African peace conference, PROCMURA understood the importance of drawing together all relevant stakeholders in order to consolidate the peace process in the sub-region and by extension, the continent.

**Right Rev. Josiah Idowu Fearon**  
**Chairman of PROCMURA**

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# Acknowledgement

It is with great humility that we report on the success of the '*Religion, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Conference*' in West Africa. The turn out and substantive issues discussed during the deliberations were indeed invaluable to the participants and to those that will have the occasion to read our report. With these sentiments we would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts and dedication that went into the preparation and organisation of the conference.

First and foremost, PROCMURA would like to express its profound gratitude to Church Development Services (EED) for the financial support they accorded us and without which the conference would not have been possible. For that we want to convey our sincere appreciation.

Secondly, we would like to thank the Christian Council of Ghana and its General secretary Dr. Fred Deegbe, who graciously hosted us in Ghana. In addition, we have to mention the PROCMURA Area Committee in Ghana specifically Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini the Area Adviser and Mrs. Joyce Larko a staff member of the Christian Council of Ghana who were our ears on the ground coordinating our efforts from Nairobi, Kenya and handling the logistics in Ghana. To the entire team we say 'thank you'. It is also prudent to mention here, the consolidated efforts of my colleagues at the PROCMURA central office. Their dedication and devotion was manifest during the long hours they put in to ensure that the conference was nothing short of successful.

Last and most importantly we would like to thank God, our enabler, without whom the conviction to serve humankind in the manner that PROCMURA is doing would have been impossible His grace keeps us going.

Thank you all!

**Joy Wandabwa**  
**Team Leader Finance and Administration**

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# Introduction

The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) in its 50 year history always recognised that if Africa has to have peace, religious peoples especially Christians and Muslims have to be at peace with one another and work together for peace in the continent.

The Accra conference which brought together Christians and Muslims from the West African sub-region to work towards conflict prevention and peace was specifically aimed at promoting peace among the two communities and urging them to work together for peace in the region. We in PROCMURA have always held the view that peace is not something that you can wish for and have it. It is something that you work, in fact toil for. Religious people should pray for peace but also ensure that their actions depict peace. This was the prime guiding principle of this conference. The point of departure was “Do not quote the Bible or the Quran or tell us how Christianity and Islam are religions of peace. This we know! What we do not exactly know is how Christians and Muslims have put the noble tenets of their religions (in that respect) into practice so that the religion may experience peace.”

This report outlines areas that breed conflict between Christians and Muslims and what the leaders need to do to avoid falling into those traps. It also outlines areas of conflict within the broader West African region and what religious leaders need to do to prevent conflicts, and where conflicts exist, what they need to do to help bring about peace.

The presentations that were made in the conference and which readers wish to explore, argue that before religious leaders can claim to be agents of peace they must demonstrate this by being at peace with one another.

In order not to make the conference a mere talking shop with no evidence of what breeds conflict and religious leaders roles in bringing about peace case studies of Sierra Leone and Liberia were put forward by religious leaders who worked hard to forestall conflict in those countries to demonstrate that it is possible. Areas of conflict in the northern part of Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire were also outlined.

We encourage readers to make time to read the papers that were presented and the reportage of the group discussions. It is in these that the minds of the presenters and the participants can be discerned.

**Johnson Mbillah**  
**General Adviser PROCMURA**



# 1.0 DAY ONE ACTIVITIES

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## 1.1 Setting the Stage for the Commencement of the Conference

The first day of the conference began with a welcome address by the Rev. Dr. Nathan Idrissu Samwini, the Area Adviser of PROCMURA for Ghana who was also the master of ceremony for the entire duration of the conference. In his welcome address, Dr. Samwini urged participants to make the most of the sittings and meaningfully address the theme of the conference. He asserted that the focus of the conference was timely since it touched on issues of peace and reconciliation which is the bed rock of any human development. To that extent, said Samwini, the conference would be beneficial not only to the religious leaders present, but also the greater West African region and the rest of Africa. He further observed that the participants had every reason to work towards the success of the conference for their own sake and for the sake of the region and Africa, adding that such would be a welcome birthday gift to PROCMURA which celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in November 2009.

## 1.2 Opening Prayers and Remembering the Departed Souls

After the preliminary remarks Dr. Samwini called on Rev. Fr. Edu Gomez General Secretary of The Gambia Christian Council (GCC) and one time Area Adviser (AA) of PROCMURA for the Gambia, and Sheikh Nigozi a Muslim leader from Togo to pray for the success of the conference.

Immediately after the opening prayers Dr. Samwini informed participants that during the year under review, some members of the PROCMURA family had passed on, and there was the need to observe a moment of silence in respect of them. The names of the departed souls mentioned included veterans and stalwarts in the persons of Rev D.O. Tetteh one time chairperson of PROCMURA for Ghana and Africa, Professor David Kerr consultant of PROCMURA, Rev. Musa Marrah Associate Area adviser of PROCMURA for Sierra Leone, Rev. Kodjo Holonou Secretary of the PROCMURA Area Committee in Togo, and Pasteur Aliou Niang, Chairperson for the Senegal Area Committee. Participants stood and observed a minute silence in respect of the departed souls.

## 1.3 Introduction of Participants

All the participants introduced themselves in a rather unique and creative manner. The master of ceremony, as a way of familiarising participants one with the other, asked participants seated adjacent to each other to confer and introduce each other to the plenary, instead of individual introductions. This helped the participants to bond while getting to know each other better, because the participants went beyond repeating the neighbour's names to giving details about them that were of importance. *(See list of attendance ANNEX XIII)*

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## 1.4 Official Opening Ceremony

The arrival at the conference grounds of Honourable Cletus Avoka Minister of Interior of the Republic of Ghana who represented the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency, John Mahama marked the beginning of the official opening of the conference. The minister of interior was met on arrival by a select group of participants who exchanged pleasantries with him and shared some few jokes here and there to make the atmosphere more relaxed.

Once the minister settled and took his seat, the MC, Dr. Samwini called on the 1st Vice Chairperson of PROCMURA, the Rev. Isaac Bodje from Côte d'Ivoire and Dr. Aboubacar Senghour a leader of the Muslim community in the Gambia, to offer prayers for the government and people of Ghana, leaders of the West Africa Sub-region and Africa as a whole for peace and tranquillity to prevail, and to commit agents of peace in the world into God's care and guidance.

The MC then proceeded to invite Mrs. Leocadie Hukporti, an Executive Committee member of PROCMURA and leader of the PROCMURA women's programme in Togo, to introduce and invite the chairperson of PROCMURA General Council, Bishop Josiah Idowu Fearon to chair the proceedings of the opening ceremony.

In his opening remarks, Bishop Fearon commended the host nation Ghana, the Christian Council of Ghana and the PROCMURA Area Committee in Ghana for hosting such an important conference that addresses matters of peace within the region. Turning his attention to the religious leaders he said to them: "We are here because we are a people of faith, and as such a people of peace. We are not going to talk about the theology of peace but the practical aspects of it." He recited (in Arabic) Qur'ān 112:1 which reads "Say: He is God the One and Only" and emphasised that Christians and Muslims both believe in the oneness of God. He then went forward to explain that he could not sincerely recite versus 2&3 which reads: "God the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not Nor is He begotten" begotten because as a Christian he believes that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God." He said that as Christians and Muslims meeting together to talk peace we do not need to condone theological differences but recognise that they exist but as people who believe in the oneness of God with different understandings of what that oneness peace we are prepared to work for peace and reconciliation under God.

Turning his attention to some Christians and some Muslims who see no reason for the two communities to meet and talk about issues that affect them and the wider society the chairperson of PROCMURA quoted Caliph Ali who said that "Man lives in fear of his own ignorance..." Peace, he argued, is a precondition for sustainable development in Africa, consequently stressing the importance the conference provided to religious leaders in opening up and speaking out on what needs to be done to make peace imperative in our religious, political, social and community lives. 'We are here as an

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assembly of religious leaders to strategise and give meaningful insight toward the development of a peaceful sub-region and Africa as a whole.

*(See Annex I for Concept Note of the peace conference)*

Bishop Fearon's address was followed by a word of welcome from the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe who is also the Chairperson of the Ghana Anti-Corruption Commission (GACC). He expressed his gratitude to PROCMURA for choosing Ghana to host the important conference and said that the Christian Council of Ghana was privileged to host it. He urged participants to feel at home and enjoy the hospitality of Ghanaians.

With these brief remarks, the General Secretary then proceeded to introduce the Guest of Honour Hon. Cletus Avoka. He said that Honourable Avoka was a Member of Parliament of Zebilla in the Upper East Region of Ghana, and the Minister of Interior of the Republic of Ghana. Honourable Avoka is a lawyer by profession and well known political figure in the country.

### **1.4.1 Introducing PROCMURA**

Following the introduction of the Minister of interior, the Master of Ceremony invited the General Adviser of PROCMURA, the Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah to give a brief outline of PROCMURA, and what it does in the African Continent. Dr. Mbillah informed the gathering that the seed of what is today PROCMURA was sown in Legon, Ghana in December 1957, watered in Ibadan Nigerian in February 1958, nurtured in Oegstseest in the Netherlands in August 1958 and transplanted in Africa as an African project in 1959. He said that PROCMURA's vision is to see a continent where faith communities in spite of their differences work together for the holistic development of the human family. PROCMURA which is now 50 years old seeks to concretise this long existing vision by continuing to employ practical approaches to achieving its objectives as is seen manifest in this meeting with a high calibre presence of religious people.

He told the Honourable minister that Ghana was chosen to host the meeting because of its good example of religious tolerance and its good example of upholding democratic values, the absence of which always led to conflicts in the West Africa sub-region. He said that PROCMURA was honoured by his presence and that participants looked forward to words of wisdom that he will bring to us from the government and people of Ghana.

### **1.4.2 Address by Guest of Honour**

The Guest of Honour, Honourable Cletus Avoka, Minister of Interior of the Republic of Ghana began his address by acknowledging the presence of members of the Executive Committee of PROCMURA, representatives of various West African countries, the national Chief Imam of Ghana, Sheikh Osman

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Nuhu. Sharabutu and his delegation, representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), FECCIWA, Christian Council of Ghana and leaders of civil society organisations.

He informed the gathering that he had come to address them on behalf of the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency John Mahama who had to travel to Lomé, Togo at the last minute to represent the President of Ghana at a meeting of West African Heads of States. He brought greetings from the Vice President who he said sent his apology for not being present himself but assured that he would be following the deliberations with keen interest.

After the observation of protocol and the opening remarks, the minister recalled the many years of PROCMURA's work in Ghana and recounted a number of interventions PROCMURA made, under the auspices of the Christian Council of Ghana, to reduce tension and re-establish peace in conflict areas in Ghana where Christian and Muslim communities live alongside each other.

Turning his attention to the West Africa sub-region and Africa as a whole, the honourable minister singled out Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Sudan where he said that PROCMURA had play key roles in helping Christian and Muslim communities to work towards peace and peaceful co-existence. He praised PROCMURA for such interventions and historical achievements and stressed the need for the intensification of PROCMURA's activities in the West Africa sub-region.

Honourable Avoka reminded the religious leaders that “Peace is inherent in religion.” this he said is the reason why Pope John Paul II in a Conference on Peace held at Assisi, invited people of religion that included members of the African Traditional Religion(s) to deliberate on peace in the world. He said that when religious people talk peace they are usually inclusive.

The honourable minister cautioned that even though peace is inherent in religion, history reminds us that religion has also been associated with violence adding that this historical reality cannot be ignored since it resurfaces from time to time. To back his assertion he mentioned the now stalled Catholics and Protestants battles in Northern Ireland the Palestinian Arabs and majority Muslims and the Israelis (Jews) who are at each other's throats. “Are there any wars that are holy?” he retorted. He argued that greed and fanaticism are the sole basis for religious conflicts giving examples of the clashes in the Northern part of Nigeria. Violence, he contended, was paradoxical to religion and challenged the mainstream religions to learn from African Traditional Religion (s) (ATR) which distances itself from violence and wars fought in the name of religion. He called on PROCMURA, and the religious leaders to engage all stakeholders and activist for peace so as to ensure that we compliment each other's efforts. He urged the religious leaders to ensure that in their bid to bring peace and reconciliation they also embark on assisting governments in eradicating the causes of violent conflicts which he enumerated as poverty, ignorance, and a lack of economic empowerment.

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In conclusion, he appealed to PROCMURA to actively increase awareness of its work in the sub-region and seek expansion to more areas in Africa subsequently setting her (Africa) toward a path devoid of violent conflicts. *“For whom much is given much is expected”* he concluded

His speech was immediately followed by a round of applause and a standing ovation by participants who appreciated the candid issues he raised and seemed to take the challenge from the minister as they geared up for concrete engagement.

*(For details of the Minister’s speech see Annex III.)*

A vote of thanks was given by the Anglophone West Africa Women’s representative in the Executive Committee of PROCMURA Ms. Annie Belle, from the Gambia. She thanked Hon. Minister Avoka for raising pertinent issues in his speech and made a gift presentation to him on behalf PROCMURA.

## **1.5 Keynote Address Outlining Conference Focus**

After the official opening Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh, of Sierra Leone was invited to chair the session for the keynote address outlining the conference’s focus by the Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah General Adviser (GA) of PROCMURA. On taking his seat, Sheikh Conteh informed the religious leaders about how he appreciates Dr. Mbillah for his long standing relationship with Muslims and other religious communities in Africa and many parts of the world and how his wealth of knowledge and experience on issues of Christian-Muslim relations is admirable. He said that the GA was not a novice in the area that the conference had been convened, and called on all to listen to him as he outlined the rationale of the conference.

Dr. Mbillah started off by sharing with the participants the issues that PROCMURA has been wrestling with over the years and which consultations of this nature seek to address. He also brought to the attention of the conference the pressing demands on them to achieve results for the immediate needs of the continent’s socio-economic growth and development. The GA then recognised all dignitaries present, Bishops, Imams, Sheikhs, Pastors, Scholars, General Secretaries and Executives from various organisations, youth and women leaders, civil society and finally the Area Advisers (AA) of PROCMURA Area Committees.

After observing protocol Dr. Mbillah stated that, *“Violent conflicts like eggs have their incubation periods leading to periods that they hatch or explode. Religious leaders are supposed to be agents of peace who should be able to detect signs of violent conflicts and prevent them from exploding.”*

He was emphatic that the continent’s peace is by and large dependent on the contributions of religious leaders because they enjoy the confidence of Africans who are by nature religious. Religious

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leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities should first and foremost get their houses in order if they have to be true agents of peace. Things that cause violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Africa and thereby militate against adherents of the two religions being true agents of peace can be listed as follows:

- Negative religious expansionist policies
- The politicisation of religion
- Globalisation/Internationalisation/Importation/Exportation of conflicts
- The challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life

In discussing the globalisation of conflict, he noted that both Christianity and Islam seem easily influenced by universal and global dimensions of conflicts. The concept of Christians as belonging to the '*Body of Christ*' and Muslims as belonging to the '*Ummah*' (universal Muslim community) attaches some sense of belonging amongst their adherents that transcends established geopolitical borders. The critical issue is therefore, how to search for common grounds among the diverse religious communities in Africa that will enhance working together for peace and peaceful co-existence.

He explained that the quest for peace and reconciliation, conflict prevention and management were key areas that the conference shall address. He said that Christians and Muslim leaders are always at pains to emphasise how their respective religions connote peace and that the Bible and the Qur'an talk about peace when some of their believers do the contrary. Dr. Mbillah emphasised that in this conference we will deemphasise the rhetoric that Islam and Christianity are religions of peace and concentrate on how religious people can be agents of peace. The GA noted that it is not Christianity and Islam that create situations of non-peace but rather Christians and Muslims. In other words it is Christians and Muslims who interpret their respective scriptures; the Bible and the Qur'an, using them to promote peace or call for war and violence. As Christian and Muslim leaders of the West Africa sub-region we are gathered here to embark on this Journey of Peace together and ensure that we live up to the ideals of our religions.

*(See in Annex IV for the complete address of the GA outlining the Conference Focus)*

### **1.5.1 Plenary Discussions on Keynote Address**

Sheikh Conte applauded the GA for the well-thought out and incisive presentation. He opened the floor for discussions and adoption of the paper as the working document for the conference.

Several questions and comments were raised. On a question concerning foreign religious imports that create conflict among religious people, the GA responded by saying that any foreign religious import that tends to set the African against his own kind or anybody for that matter must be

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rejected. He said that religion was meant to transform lives for the better and not deform them for the worst. The major source of conflict between Christians and Muslim he suggested was negative religious expansionist policies that had no guiding ethic.

However, the political dimensions of these issues of conflict came to the fore when Rev. Ezekiel Lesmore from Nigeria North sought to know whether page 3 of the address by Dr. Mbillah, which talks about the politicisation of religion, implies that religion must be divorced from politics all together. He said that if that was the case then it will negate the moral authority vested on religious leaders to question political leaders of their actions. In response, Dr. Mbillah emphasised the need to encourage good people of religious standing to take up political positions and be engaged in politics. He however emphasised that in his opinion if an ordained Church Leader or the Imam of the mosque engaged in partisan politics they will lose their moral authority to bring governments to order since they would also be partisan in their sense of judgement. He cited a situation in Kenya where religious leaders were so much involved in partisan politics that when violence broke out as a result of elections they had no moral authority to speak out since they were part of the problem. He lamented that when people of religion entered politics leaders of churches and mosques failed to contact them and express their concern on national issues even though such persons were committed Christians or Muslims at the time that they entered politics. He urged religious leaders to keep in close contact with their adherents when they are in politics and hold talks with them on a regular basis.

On the question of negative religious expansionist policies, the GA explained that there should be a simple guiding ethic between Christians and Muslims so that in carrying out Christian evangelism and Muslim *da'wah* (invitation to non-Muslims to become Muslims) preachers can say how good their religions are and desist from saying how bad other person's religion is.

Sheikh Conteh acknowledged that most of the itinerant preachers are seldom members of any particular Muslim or Christian group or denomination, who must take responsibility for their actions. We have to work at them he said adding: "*the basic problem is ignorance about the other religion*" he concluded

Indeed ignorance is a credible instigator for intra and inter-religious conflicts which intensify and spill over into the different facets of life not just limited to social, ethnic/cultural and economic. Sheikh Conteh gave an example of the Khadi courts debate in Kenya and the Sharia issues in Nigeria which Christians see as unjust. He emphasised that the issues that ought to have been raised should not have been the value of the two systems but rather the variation of the justice system of a country based on religious affiliation. The discussions should have centred on how the courts can conform to present day realities or even help to reduce acts of discrimination, misuse of authority, suppression, and negative indoctrination among other vices.



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Rev. Moses Khanu, PROCMURA's Regional Coordinator for Anglophone West Africa reiterated the issue of the politicisation of religion citing examples in cases where appointments to political offices were done based on religious affiliations and/or along ethnic lines. Notably, he was concerned with an emerging trend where religious leaders were seeking political offices under the guise of divine ordination. Rev. Khanu noted that "Ethnic groups in Africa have a long history of enculturation with Christianity or Islam". On this, Dr. Mbillah elaborated that, men and women of God should resign from their positions as religious leaders before participating in partisan politics. Likewise, no politician should declare a particular country, a religious state of one religion or the other because the exclusive nature of a socio-political order breeds contempt and abuse.

The GA said that there was a need for leaders to seriously engage the youth to find out if they are being negatively indoctrinated or being taught religious tenets that would lead to hatred of those whose beliefs are different from theirs. Emphasis should be on the youth for they bear the key to the future of the continent. They must first be trained to be at peace with themselves and then transform the pacifism into an extended practice in their lives and in the community. When people are not at peace with themselves, they can hardly make peace with others. It is worth noting that in our contemporary societies, any foreign input that does not transform lives will deform them.

Alhaji Gado from Cote d'Ivoire emphasised that the discussion should not be mere rhetoric but instead should aim at dealing with practical matters. His statement came in as an affirmation of the GA's position when he clearly outlined the focus of the conference during the keynote address. He called on both Christian and Muslim leaders to rebuke publicly individuals that bear their labels and commit acts that brew conflicts in communities. Also religious leaders should do away with the habit of instilling fear among their faithful by preaching hell and instead focus on the possibilities of paradise (heaven).

## **1.6 Word of Greetings**

The afternoon session of the Conference began with the nomination of, Haja Adama B. Jawandah from the National Muslim Council of Liberia as chair of the session. She thanked the plenary for her preferment and called on the various representatives of partner organisations to offer their words of greeting:

### **a.) All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)**

Mr. Bright Mawudor the Deputy General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) brought greetings on behalf of the General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. André Karamaga, and on behalf of Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Tanzania who is currently the president of the AACC.



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He called on religious leaders to end suspicion, mistrust and discord among themselves, and work towards the acceptance of Africa into the rank and file of respected comity of continents in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Deputy General Secretary acknowledged the seriousness that the ecumenical movement has attached to peacebuilding on the African Continent and commended PROCMURA for its fifty (50) years of service in this regard. He further went on to quote texts from the Bible and Qur'an respectively "Blessed are the Peace makers...." "Oh mankind, we have created you male and female and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another and live in peace." These texts, he said, provide justification for religious people to continue in their efforts to follow the common principles of justice and peacebuilding. He finally pledged the AACC's accompaniment to the work of PROCMURA and praised the collaborative efforts of the two organisations.

#### **b.) World Council of Churches (WCC)**

Rev. Dr. Simon Dossou, the Africa President of the World Council of Churches brought greetings on behalf of the world body. In his statement, he said that the WCC acknowledges the difficulty in living up to the peace challenges of our time and called for continuous dialogue between Christians and Muslims as with other religions to bring peace to the African continent. He extolled those who call for peace saying that they should be the main actors for peace. Ms Liz Rose from the UK who accompanied Dr. Dossou commended PROCMURA as a model organisation and promised to share the experience she has had with others when she is back in the United Kingdom.

#### **c.) Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA)**

In his goodwill message, Rev. Tolbert Thomas Jallah Jnr. of the Lutheran Church in Liberia and General Secretary of FECCIWA made an assessment of the authority of religious leaders in their communities comparing it with the analogy of Karl Marx "...religion is the opium of the masses..." Rev. Jallah who is also an ex-officio of the Liberia Area Committee acknowledged that religious people are the custodians of peace and pledged partnership with PROCMURA to ensure that conflicts are reduced by building bridges of understanding between religious peoples. He reiterated that conflicts bring poverty, destruction, hunger, and the degeneration of God's people. He concluded by reemphasising that the partnership of FECCIWA with PROCMURA would be strengthened during his tenure as General Secretary to advance its work in the sub-region.

#### **d.) Ghana Area Committee of PROCMURA**

The Chairperson of PROCMURA Area Committee in Ghana, Lt. Col. Adu Manu, as the host, welcomed all delegates in the local dialect saying 'AKWAABA' which means 'Welcome'.

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He expressed his appreciation for the central office's choice in Ghana as the venue for such an historical event within the sub-region and prayed that God through Jesus Christ give delegates safe travels back to their respective countries after their fruitful deliberations.

### **e.) National Chief Imam of Ghana**

The National Chief Imam Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharabutu on behalf of the Muslim Community in Ghana welcomed all the delegates from the different countries in West Africa attending the conference. He then commended PROCMURA for the good work of peace it is engaged in within the continent.

The Imam noted that, "it was rather regrettable that at a time when as Africans we needed peace and unity to tackle and overcome the major challenges posed by debilitating diseases, poverty and malnutrition confronting our societies, we were dissipating our energies fighting each other instead of developing the little valuable assets built up from our sweat. In the process we end up missing valuable opportunities for socio-economic development and transformation of our societies".

In his conclusion, he called for inter-faith action against poverty and malnutrition in the sub-region and asked Allah to give us all grace for the conduct of the Conference.

The Chief Imam's address brought the session chaired by Haja Jawandoh of Liberia to a close.

Sheikh Conteh of Sierra Leone took over as chair and after a brief reflection from members on the activities of the day it was decided that they break into groups to continue to discuss and reflect on the issues the General Adviser had raised in preparation for the following days programme activities. The delegates agreed by consensus that they form five (5) groups to continue further discussions on the focus of the conference.

It was further agreed that the groups be given more time to exhaustively discuss the issues and present their reports to plenary on the following day. The session was thus brought to a close and participants moved to their various groups to begin discussions.

## 2.0 DAY TWO ACTIVITIES

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The Rev Isaac Bodje, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairperson of PROCMURA set the day's proceedings in motion by calling on all to prepare themselves for business. He recollected the proceedings of the previous day and praised members for making the day fruitful. He urged the religious leaders to remain focused for the days deliberations which he said would be full of information and will delve into critical issues of peace in the region.

### 2.1 Prayer to begin the day

After the preliminary remarks by the Vice Chair he invited Pasteur Darou Salim Kognaw from Togo and Sheikh Muhammad Mahdi Shehu from Nigeria North to offer prayers for the day's proceedings.

The two leaders asked Allah to be with the gathering and help the leader to steer through fruitful and reflective discussions.

### 2.2 Paper on Conflict Trends and the Role of Religious Leaders in the Prevention of Violent Conflicts

The Rev. Pasteur Isaac Bodje invited Aisha Saidu Abubakri to introduce Mr. Emmanuel Bombande, The Executive Director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to speak on the topic: "Conflict Trends and the role of Religious Leaders in the Prevention of Violent Conflicts in West Africa".

Mr. Bombande started by painting a mental picture of the culture of peace in the African tradition as reflected in the ancient nation of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) which has such a value for peace that has become well known over the centuries. He raised issues on how ancient cultures of peace can be employed to conflict even in the modern era.

He quickly noted that the essence of gathering religious leaders in this conference was to move away from the conceptual theories to practical realities, which is now a crucial demand for the continent's survival. He emphatically stated that conflict prevention is a proactive measure, citing instances in the Liberian war that spread across to other West African states. While the intervention of the Inter-faith Mediation Committee of Liberia succeeded in making peace, a more proactive measure could have prevented the crisis from taking place in the first place. Political interests by religious leaders, he said kept them back from proper collaboration that would have mitigated the situation and probably even prevented the war.

Furthermore, elaborating on how religious leaders have the capacity to prevent social, religious, political and internal conflicts. His claim was that politics in many ways has already been shaped by religion. Religious leaders must remain dynamic and maintain a holistic approach in their efforts to prevent violent conflicts at all four levels.

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He mentioned that some of the key trends of conflicts in the sub-region include conflicts taking ethnic and religious cleavages; patronising conditions set by colonialism and international geo-politics. He added that patronage has set up perceptions that compromise moral integrity so that instead of enhancing 'human security' the government rather emphasises on 'state security'. These he said, brews apprehension and resentment among the citizenry. Finally, Mr. Bombande saluted PROCMURA and the religious leaders with a voice of certainty and bade them success in their efforts to bring about peace in the region and in the continent.

*(See Annex V for the full paper)*

### **2.2.1 Plenary Discussions**

The first question to the speaker centred on the prevailing issue in Benin where the President is a member of the Pentecostal church and serves as an evangelist. How could he hold the highest political position and do the work of an evangelist? The speaker in response remarked that though religious leaders should not be active politicians, politics is about how society is organised and its religion that gives politics its mandate.

Rev. Joseph Diouf, PROCMURA Area Adviser for Senegal, commended the speaker and observed that though there have been good relations in Senegal among Christians and Muslims, there is the problem of apprehension surrounding succession. Indeed, he also acknowledged that while in Egypt, other religions do exist their principal identity is a Muslim one. This begs the question is political authority vested on the basis of the preserve of the majority group?

Rev. Sahr Kemoore Salia, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Sierra Leone (CCSL), commented on the non-prophetic religious leaders who were losing their leverage to impact their communities.

Rev. Fr. Edu Gomez, General Secretary of Gambia Christian Council (GCC) called the attention of the conference to the two different kinds of religious leaders; those that are vociferous advocates for justice and peace and the silent prayerful ones.

The speaker in response to the above comments noted that politicians are likely to play one group against the other. It is upon them as the citizenry to not fall into this political mileage set ups. Accordingly, he advised religious leaders to enhance the collaboration among themselves which eventually becomes an asset and works for them in terms of leverage.

Haja Maimuna Conteh from Sierra Leone commended the speaker saying he not only dealt with the conflict trends but the roles religious leaders should choose to realise achievable results. On behalf of PROCMURA, she presented to Mr. Bombande a token of appreciation for his presentation and for availing himself for the conference.

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The meeting recessed for tea and to prepare to receive the group reports on the key issues on the conference rationale and what that means for the different countries focuses of peace, reconciliation and conflict prevention in the sub-region.

## **2.3 Group Reports to Plenary**

### **GROUP I**

#### **REPORT ON GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON KEYNOTE ADDRESS OUTLINING CONFERENCE FOCUS**

##### **BY REV. DR. JOHNSON MBILLAH PROCMURA GENERAL ADVISER**

The group began their deliberations by analysing how religious leaders are chosen or appointed. It was generally agreed that leadership in religion is attained through ordination, appointments, election, hereditary succession and at times by self imposition. The leadership factor, the group agreed, is a strong factor in peacebuilding and reconciliation where religious leaders are expected to be true agents of peace but which they sometimes failed to project due to reasons which include:

- i. Partiality: Some leaders are seen taking sides on issues where they are supposed to be neutral. This amounts to injustice which makes people lose hope and confidence in them.
- ii. Some are not honest to their call or that they are not even divinely called and so lack guidance on the responsibilities before them.
- iii. Some lack personal qualities like honesty, humility, transparency, integrity, and knowledge.
- iv. Some do not have viable means of livelihood and so depend solely on what their followers or students bring to them.

#### **Peace between the Religions as a prerequisite for Religious Leaders to Promote Peace within the wider society**

The wide gulf between theory and practice of religion on peaceful existence seems to have created the impression that religions generally could have no effective say on conflict resolution. People seem to be tired of verbal references to Islam and Christianity as religions of peace and that preach of peace, while the perception is that the religions try to offer what they don't possess. We therefore concur with the PROCMURA General Adviser; the bane to making the message of peace acceptable to all others are:

- a) Negative religious expansionist policies
- b) The politicisation of religion
- c) Globalisation/Internalisation/importation/exportation of conflict

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- d) The challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life

To avert the above mentioned problems therefore we suggest that:

- i. Religious leaders should emphasise the issue of peace and peaceful co-existence in their teachings
- ii. Methods of evangelisation and da'wah need to be adjusted to avoid defamatory, derogatory and provocative preaching or remarks against the other's religion.
- iii. To ensure objectivity and neutrality, religious leaders should avoid taking sides with a party or candidate and should not allow their pulpit to be used as a campaigning platform for a party or a particular candidate.
- iv. Religious leaders should not openly be involved in party politics.
- v. Misconceptions about Christianity being affiliated with the West and Islam to the East often spur negative responses and this needs to be corrected.
- vi. The importation of conflicts to Africa depicts Africans as being primitive and uncivilised hence the justification for their enslavement and colonisation. We have to correct this misconception through our actions. Muslims and Christians should talk together as a people rather than transferring unwarranted aggression to one another.
- vii. Certainly, both the Bible and the Qur'an contain certain similar virtues like justice, equality, neighbourliness, sanctity of life and property, forgiveness etc. These must be harnessed and emphasised by the two religions.
- viii. All the faithful should put into practice the teachings of their religions. In other words, they should walk the talk.

### **Causes of Conflict**

- ➔ Intolerance
- ➔ Stereotyping
- ➔ Misconceptions/misunderstanding
- ➔ Ignorance
- ➔ Wrong teaching/indoctrination
- ➔ Mistrust

### **Advocacy for Peace by Example**

- ➔ For people to live in peace in our societies, members of the two religions should first of all see each other as one and settle their differences amicably without resorting to violence. They should also trust each other.

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- Leaders of the two religions should be meeting regularly to iron out issues of mutual concern. In other words, interfaith forum should be put in place for mutual cooperation.
  - Religious leaders should not harbour or protect corrupt politicians because of their affiliation to a religion. They should publicly condemn such public officers and disassociate themselves from such irreligious practices.
  - Finally, adherents of religion must desist from being Moses in the face and Pharaoh at heart.

### **Members of the Group**

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Rev. Fr. Edu Gomez (Chairman) | 7. Lt. Col. Adu-Manu                   |
| 2. Rev. Jerry Daniel Dogbey      | 8. Dr. Theodocia Fadeyi                |
| 3. Mrs. Justina Mike Ngwobia     | 9. Mr. Mohammed Mahdi Shehu            |
| 4. Mrs. ELizabeth Rose           | 10. Dr. R. Ibrahim Adebayo (Secretary) |
| 5. Bright Mawudor                | 11. Mr. Kefas s. Akundo                |
| 6. Kate Agbenyike                |  |

## **GROUP II**

### **REPORT AND RESPONSE TO PROCMURA GENERAL ADVISER'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

#### 1. Religious Leaders as agents of Peace

Reasons for Religious Leaders not being able to assert themselves as agents of peace are:

- a. Lack of understanding and knowledge of other people's religious beliefs and practices.
- b. Indoctrination and disseminating of wrong methods and teachings of their faith.
- c. Failure of leaders to practically demonstrate what they teach about their faith.
- d. Being partisan on religious and political issues.

#### 2. What religious leaders should do or not do in order to promote Peace:

##### A) Politicisation of Religion

- i. Politicisation of religion should be avoided by religious leaders.
- ii. They should stop playing the role of king makers.
- iii. Religious leaders must be responsible enough so as to ensure that they are not lured into irresponsible acts.
- iv. They should be ready to teach the ideals of their faith as well as live what they teach.

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## B) Negative religious expansionist policy

- i. Humanitarian aid are sometimes used for proselytising
- ii. Promotion and positions are sometime only open to adherents of one religion to the exclusion of others.
- iii. Some education policies, curricular and syllabus sometimes favour one religious group.

## C) Importation of Conflict

- i. Through acts of fanaticism – conflicts have been transported from other countries/ continents and negatively affected African countries.
- ii. Religious leaders should go back to their respective scriptures in order to provide authentic teachings about the world view of their faith.
- iii. There is need for a contextual approach to situational ethics. Leaders also need to be well educated about their faith and the faith of others.
- iv. Corruption of religious leaders; those who take grants for some socio-religious activities which they have not implemented, cause conflict to justify their claims, this must stop; instead leaders should be transparent in their dealings.

## 3. The Challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life

Religious leaders should deflect from hypocritical attitudes and allow their action speak louder than their (voice) words. They should advocate for peace by example.

Religious leaders must know the meaning of peace and how to effectively demonstrate it.

## 4. Causes of Conflict

- a. Misinformation about issues that has religious connotation
- b. Greed
- c. Ignorance
- d. Land disputes
- e. Stereotyping and prejudices
- f. Provocative preaching
- g. Transfer of aggression as an act identifying with some suffering brothers in the concept of the *Ummah* and Body of Christ
- h. Fanaticism caused by indoctrination
- i. Human frustration
- j. Intra and Inter-religious differences



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- k. Negative religious expansionist tendencies
  - l. Marginalisation and victimisation in civil/government service
  - m. Access to limited resources
  - n. Religious intolerance
  - o. Ethnicity

### Conclusion

Religious leaders should take cognisance of all that is enumerated above and thus seek peace and work towards peacebuilding and reconciliation in the society, through training and collaboration with people of other faith.

### Members of Group

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Haja Adama Jawandoh          | 5. Ms. Annie Belle                           |
| 2. Ms. Rebecca Tarpeh           | 6. Rev. Dr. Fola Lateju (Secretary)          |
| 3. Rev. Sahr Kemoore Salia      | 7. Rev. Dr. Bridget Ben-Naimah (Chairperson) |
| 4. Mrs. Memunatu Fofanah Conteh | 8. Rev. Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel               |

## GROUP III

The group made a critical observation on the “Keynote Address outlining the Conference Focus” by Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, that Africa is prone to conflicts including religious and other conflicts which continue to retard its progress and economic development. There are many causes to these conflicts and Religious Leaders are expected to play important roles to end them.

Africans look up to Religious Leaders for guidance to bring about peace in conflict situations. Unfortunately, they have failed to act as agents of peace in many instances for the following reasons:

1. Shallow understanding of their own religions and the lack of understanding of each others’ religion.
2. Itinerant preaching of hate messages by some religious leaders.
3. Vested interest of religious leaders in political, economic, social issues etc.
4. Focus of religious leaders on issues that divide them more than what unites them.
5. Use of provocative methodology for witnessing and propagation of faith.

Some recommendations that can measure up to achievable results in a process of curbing such conflicts would include:

- ❑ Encouraging a minimum knowledge of both religions in schools and homes.

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- ❑ Encouraging positive relationships among religious people.
  - ❑ Minimise or discourage intra and inter-religious conflicts.
  - ❑ Establishment of a Code of Conduct monitored and based on our religious scriptures
  - ❑ Relay lessons learnt to various constituencies.
  - ❑ De-globalisation of local conflicts.
  - ❑ Cultivation of mutual respect and positive tolerance among religious leaders.
  - ❑ Provide constitutional and legislative safeguards against religious conflicts.

### Members of Group

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Rev. St. John York           | 6. Mamah Gado Mohammed (Chairperson) |
| 2. Rev. Moses Khanu (Secretary) | 7. Dr. Aboubacar A. Senghore         |
| 3. Aisha Saidu Abubakar         | 8. Sheikh Salman Mohammed Alhassan   |
| 4. Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh     | 9. Hannah Mallah                     |
| 5. Rt. Rev. Dr. Josiah Fearon   |                                      |

## GROUP IV

The group appreciated the presentation of the General Adviser and made the following contributions:

### Religious leaders as Agents of peace

The group believes that peace is a necessity for all religious groups. Therefore Christians and Muslims have the capacity to promote peace and bring reconciliation where there is conflict. But the question is how can we achieve this?

It should be noted that most state leaders and decision makers belong to religious communities (Muslim and Christian), they are men of faith, and they are followers of religious communities

As such, they can be approached and counselled.

In case of conflict, religious leaders must be persuaded about the importance of peace, they should also invite groups in conflict and mediate towards the resolution of such conflicts through peaceful means.

Religious leaders should recognise that the peace of the country depends on the peace of religious communities. Religious leaders can propel governments to recognise the values of peace and reconciliation and work towards achieving that.

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To do this, religious leaders need to show love, courage, boldness, determination and belief. So it is incumbent on religious leaders and religious communities to observe the tenets of their respective scriptures to help them to promote peace and reconciliation.

Another thing that religious leaders need to do is to ensure that they themselves live and show the example of the value of peace and reconciliation so that others may emulate them.

About the point which deals with the religious extremism that is growing and about which serious actions should be taken to curb it, Group 2 suggests that religious leaders use their holy scriptures to inculcate religious values that would promote peace among their followers.

Religious communities should ensure that their living environment, no matter how small scale it may be, works towards loving one another and sharing life with all. Such an attitude would help prevent extremism.

Christians and Muslims who worship one God should accept that their understanding of the one God is different and accept that as a living reality to live with and not condemn each other.

They should agree that the other person may be different from me and may have a different perception of things, other than mine. If we come to this understanding and communicate it to others, we can curb religious extremism.

**Peace between religions as a prerequisite for religious leaders to promote peace in the society as a whole.**

On this point, negative religious expansionism should be noted and fought against. To do this, there is need for a kind of training of clergy, imams and religious scholars on the importance of religious tolerance and how to relate with state functionaries to promote peace.

We must also create interreligious groups for reflection, education and where possible, joint publications for training, information and education of the faithful of both religions.

**About the politicisation of religion**, the group suggests that religion should be kept out of the fray, keep its neutrality and keep all its dignity so as to play its role as peace brokers and conflict prevention when the need arises.

**About the negative solidarity**, the group stressed that we should not import conflicts that happen elsewhere. One does not need to defend God - God is neither weak nor poor to wait for our support; He Himself is sufficient and can defend Himself.

The solidarity that we need for our fellow brothers from other backgrounds living in difficulties is to support them in prayer as well as physically and materially.

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We also have the mission as religious leaders to make representations to warring factions to forestall conflict.

### **Peace Support**

On this point, the group suggested that it is the responsibility of every religious leader and every religious group at all levels to seek peace, live it, and promote it. And if there is conflict, to try by all means to settle it peacefully through mediation and negotiation.

### **Group Members**

1. Mrs Touh Hukporti Leocadie
2. Sheikh Anifouroche A. Raimi
3. Rev. Jacob Binguitura-Fare
4. Sheikh Youssouf Yousef
5. Mrs Kaba-Aissatou
6. Mrs. Dehoumon Feora
7. Rev. Dr. Desire Drake (Secretary)
8. Sheikh Konate Youssouf (Chairperson)

## **Reflection Group V**

### **How religious leaders can be agents of peace?**

When religious leaders are appointed or elected and accepted by all; they can and should be agents of peace. However, they must be at the height of this task through training. They must raise the voice before conflicts escalate with humility and wisdom and not wait till such conflicts are exacerbated before they act- they must be proactive.

Religious leaders must avoid being influenced by a particular group. They have to exercise neutrality with their main objective being that of peace.

### **The Negative Religious Expansionist policies.**

Religious leaders must be trained and informed so as to educate their followers on the values of peace and avoid prejudice.

### **The Politicization of Religion**

Religious leaders should be informed about politics since they will always be approached and advice solicited by political leaders. However, they should still retain their dignity.

Prophet Nathan had the courage to come to King David to talk about his mistakes and the latter was repentant.

### **Globalization / Internationalization / Importing and Exporting of conflict**

There is the need to develop programs for the prevention of conflicts in institutions, mosques and churches

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Combat evil with good deeds.

Avoid being in solidarity with those who do not seek the peace of the land.

**The challenge of translating good Precepts of Religion into good practices in the daily**

Deal with ignorance,

Deal with sources of conflict

Continuous training of members of the Christian and Muslim communities on issues of peace and peaceful co-existence and prevention of violent conflicts.

Ensure that all understand that we have to live with our differences in peace.

**The Causes of Conflict**

- i. Ignorance
- ii. Religious fanaticism,
- iii. Illiteracy,
- iv. Intolerance,
- v. Negative solidarity

We as a group would like to conclude by saying that before religious leaders can work together to promote and support peace, for example, it is necessary that they have peace among themselves

In the Cote d'Ivoire, for example, the establishment of an interfaith forum helped religious leaders to come together and discuss peace in that country.

**Members of the Group**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Rev. Dr. Simon K. DOUSSOU            | 6. Ms IGUEO FATIMA                  |
| 2. Rev, KADERA Bamerbanoma Innocent     | 7. SAMECKEN Jeanne                  |
| 3. Rev. Isaac Bodje                     | 8. Mrs DAROU –SALIM-Kognau          |
| 4. Mr. Paul SAI                         | 9. Pasteur Joseph Diouf (Secretary) |
| 5. Pasteur Tasoba Flavien (Chairperson) |                                     |

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## 2.4 Case Studies: Collaboration for Peace

After the presentation of the role of religious leaders in the prevention of conflicts the stage was set for participants to engage in case studies of a number of countries in the West African sub-region. The countries listed to make the presentations were Nigeria north, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire. The Rev. Dr. Drake PROCMURA's Francophone West Africa Regional Coordinator and Sheikh Salman Mohammad Alhassan from Ghana offered prayers for the commencement of the session.

### 2.4.1 The Situation in Nigeria North

The conference attention was drawn to the critical situation in the northern parts of Nigeria where owing to its history of religious conflicts, mostly caused by economic, social, ethnic and land ownership disputes, which are often given strong religious colouring. Rt Rev. Josiah Idowu Fearon PROCMURA's chairperson for the continent and Bishop of the Church of Nigeria, Kaduna Diocese, summed the long and complex situation of the northern part of Nigeria in a short narrative that clearly brought out the Christian-Muslim relations situation in the region.

Recounting the history of the presence of Islam in the northern part of Nigeria, he said that before the coming of the British and their subsequent rule of the region, Islam had already been established. The 1960 independence constitution which saw Nigeria (north, south, east and west) become one country had the Shariah law in the constitution. The Shariah, however, did not include the criminal (*hudud*) aspect. As far as the north was concerned Christians generally felt that they were treated as second class citizens. The Igbo war of secession known as the Biafra War in 1966 compounded the religious problems as the Igbo's are mainly Christians. A succession of military coups and rules thereafter did not help unify the people. Moves to create a situation whereby Christians and Muslims could meet and talk on issues that will enable them live in peace were not readily understood and appreciated by a large segment of the Muslim and Christian community. Some even targeted those of us engaged in Christian-Muslim dialogue for elimination terming us as traitors of the faith.

Today there is inter-religious cooperation but still many challenges abound. The Muslim and Christian communities are beginning to understand the importance of collaboration and cooperation even with the implication of tearing each other apart and getting at each others throats. A view that is also beginning to be embraced by traditional leaders.

Sheikh Mahdi Shehu, a Muslim counterpart of Archbishop Fearon in the advocacy for peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in the north of Nigeria in his contribution pointed to the inevitability of conflicts in the northern part of Nigeria due to deep-rooted suspicion and lack of goodwill among some members of the two communities. He said that organisations such as PROCMURA and 'Bridge Builders', an organisation he and Bishop Fearon co-founded, are doing their utter most

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best to keep the light of peace and understanding burning. He said that if criminals can commit crimes in the name of religion and be successful why can't religious leaders of goodwill build bridges for people to live harmoniously together with their diversities and even be more successful he quipped.

## **2.4.2 The Role Christian and Muslim leaders played in the Sierra Leon Peace Process**

A case study on Christian and Muslim leaders proactive measures to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone, jointly presented by Rev. Moses Khanu and Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh

The main thrust of their presentation was on how members of the PROCMURA Area Committee and other Christian and Muslim leaders actively participated in Christian and Muslim collaboration through advocacy and action for the cessation of hostilities in Sierra Leone's civil conflict from 1991 onwards.

Rev. Moses Khanu, the PROCMURA Anglophone West Africa Regional Coordinator, recapped some of the historical antecedents that gave rise to the collaboration between Christian and Muslim leaders to bring peace in Sierra Leone.

Giving the historical overview of Sierra Leone, he pointed out that it is a nation that had hosted freed slaves from Halifax, Canada and ancestors from the Futa Djallon, colonised by the British in the 1800s, and which eventually received independence in 1961. He added that Sierra Leone has a population of around 5.2 million inhabitants. Enlisting the causes of the protracted war that brought the country to its knees he cited bad governance, greed and corruption, inherited from the post-independence administration. Notably though was the fact that at some point in time, it became difficult to determine the type of governance system that was being used in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone, he emphasised has a fused community of Christians and Muslims wherein inter-faith marriages and inter-faith co-operation come easily. PROCMURA's work in Sierra Leone started in the 1970's and its leaders have continued to make contributions in the communities that have greatly enhanced the peace process of the country.

In his contribution, Sheikh Conteh emphasised that were it not for the collaboration between Christians and Muslims who dared to meet with the rebels and help broker peace the war would have gone from worse to unimaginable. He cited an instance where Rev. Khanu himself had to use his own financial resources and how both mosques and churches also had to contribute financially to keep the movement of peace ongoing. He lauded the cordiality and cooperation between Christians and Muslims in Sierra Leone and gave examples of Christians' financial contributions to members of the Muslim community in the building of Mosques and how other Muslims have contributed in like manner, in the construction of Churches. This is only one of the many collaboration is manifest among Christians and Muslims in Sierra Leone.

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Turning on the challenges facing Muslims and Christians in the cooperation for peace in Sierra Leone, the Rev. Khanu noted that the major challenge has been partisan politics. This he said had a tendency to compromise the integrity of leaders in being neutral towards conflicting groups. He said that in spite of these the Christian and Muslim leaders still keep on working hard to ensure that the country remains in peace.

*(For a full view of the presentation see Annex VI)*



## 3.0 DAY THREE ACTIVITIES

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### 3.1 Prayers to begin the day

The day began with prayers from Haja Aissatou Kaba from Liberia and Rev. Dr. Bridget-Ben-Naimah. After which the chairperson for the day's plenary session Ms. Justina Mike Ngwobia, from Northern Nigeria, took over to preside over sessions proceedings.

### 3.2 Case Studies Continued

#### 3.2.1 Christian and Muslim Leaders Collaboration for Peace in Liberia

The presentations of the case studies on Christian and Muslim Leaders Collaboration for Peace continued with a presentation on Liberia by Dr. Benjamin D. Lartey, the General Secretary of the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) and an Executive Committee member of PROCMURA.

Dr. Lartey recognised the active role of the Liberia Area Committee and the delegation present at the conference. He argued that, to a large extent, religious leaders in Liberia have been proactive in peace-building activities. He cited an example in 1997 when religious leaders sent signals that it was not time for elections and that if elections were hurried, the eventual outcome would be chaos and conflict. The International Community failed to take heed of the religious groups and gave a go ahead to the process. Not long thereafter the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was formed in Guinea and this led to the commencement of another round of war. Although religious leaders persuaded the government of Taylor to opt for dialogue, he denied there was a war being fought.

Insistently, the religious leaders approached ECOWAS and the International Community to intervene. "We became a source of inspiration for the thousands of Liberian people who were caught up in battle zones between government forces and LURD soldiers" he added. Religious Leaders braved the war and went into the fighters camps to negotiate with them, calling for a ceasefire and urging them to come to the peace table. Consequently, religious leaders witnessed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra that set the basis for general elections that were held in 2005. In addition, religious leaders monitored the processes of disarmament of ex-combatants, reintegration and elections.

Collaborations between Christian and Muslim leaders in Liberia have yielded achievements that a three day conference cannot sum up declared Dr. Lartey. The Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) started its interventions as far back as the onset of the Liberian crisis in 1979 where it called for a stay home action against the Government of Liberia.

The 2004 incidents that brought the burning down of some Churches and Mosques was an offshoot of the crises indicative of the deep lapse in the rule of law. However, continued collaboration amongst

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Christian and Muslim leaders is doing the job better than imagined.

*(See in Annex VII for details of the presentation)*

### **3.2.2 Christian and Muslim dynamics in Cote d'Ivoire**

Imam Youssouf Konate presented on the situation in Cote d'Ivoire. In his opening remarks, he praised PROCMURA for providing a platform for Christians and Muslims to meet and look at how they can work together for peace in their countries, in the West African sub-region and even in the entire continent of Africa. He said that the forum was an eye opener that would enable Muslim and Christian leaders to commit themselves to peace, ensuring that their members do not kill each other or others in the name of their respective religions. He continued on to urge delegates to uphold justice, human dignity, and the rule of law saying that Cote d'Ivoire was nearly ripped apart by the conflict that raged the country in the recent past.

On measures taken so far, Imam Konate assured the plenary that Christian and Muslim leaders had taken up the responsibility to pray and work towards peace in the country. In winding up he said that religious leaders were working towards the institution of an action plan that would enable them monitor the upcoming election process to prevent any recurrence of past events that degenerated into conflict.

## **3.3 Action Plan**

The religious leaders recognizing the need for their collaboration towards the restoration of the continent to number among the comity of nations signed a Communiqué (*See Annex II*) and committed themselves to its instant dissemination. Each country discussed a plan of action for the way forward of the consultations and shared contacts for immediate networking within the region. Reports of action plans are in the confidence of PROCMURA for the sole purpose of mapping out the course of action to benefit each country and the continent as a whole.

## 4.0 Recommendations

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The recommendations following the conference were arrived at based on the need to address the question of peacebuilding in the region and sustainability of this peace. Therefore, drawing input from the different participants was crucial to the recommendations because it reflected the specific needs of their respective areas.

In order to make this more effective delegates from each country met and brought to the fore their own visions for implementing the conference objectives in their countries. A group was formed to synchronise the recommendations which we now tabulate as:

- 1.) That PROCMURA consider organising a follow up conference in the region that will bring together the different stakeholders i.e. Politicians and religious leaders, to chart a course on peace in the region. That such a conference will enable the religious leaders and politicians to engage one another and thus recognise the need for them to collaborate for peace and development.
- 2.) That PROCMURA considers calling an Africa conference that would bring together Christian and Muslim leaders and political leaders from African regional bodies and the African Union to discuss the health and wellbeing of this religious continent. That such an African meeting of Christian and Muslim leaders would be able to strategise on peace, conflict prevention and reconciliation in the continent.
- 3.) That PROCMURA should consider creating a forum for West African women from both Christian and Muslim religions to address issues of mutual concern in respect to justice, peace and reconciliation. That such a forum should be replicated in other sub-regions with the objective of forming an African network of Christian and Muslim women for justice, peace and reconciliation.
- 4.) That the Accra conference objectives and decisions should be replicated in all countries of the sub-region with specific training programmes and consultations with regards to peace and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims and conflict prevention within the wider society.
- 5.) That PROCMURA should step up a networking session on Christian-Muslim relations for stakeholders across Africa, through a joint workshop of religious leaders from East, West, North and South Africa and that such a workshop should form the basis of implementing item recommendation 2 above.

## 5.0 ANNEXES

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### ANNEX I

#### BACKGROUND OF PROCMURA AND CONCEPT NOTE OF CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION IN WEST AFRICA 20-24 JULY 2009

##### PROCMURA Profile

The Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) is a Pan African Christian organization dedicated to Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace in the society and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims

Founded in 1959 when independent nation-states in Africa were on the rise and the place of religion in international affairs was subdued by negotiations on critical issues such as the Cold War and its impact on nations, PROCMURA had already envisaged a situation where religion (Christianity and Islam) would become dominant forces in public life. It recognised that future independent nations which African nationalists' movements were agitating for, would be made up of Christians, Muslims, practitioners of African Traditional Religion(s) among others, and that Christianity and Islam were likely to be the best or worst of rivals since both religions are missionary in character. The forefathers and foremothers of PROCMURA therefore evolved an approach to Islam and Muslims devoid of polemical traits, and aimed at Christians constructively relating with Muslims to ensure conflicts that may arise between adherents of the two religions are addressed in a non-violent manner and that they are able to cooperate and collaborate for peace and peaceful co-existence.

##### PROCMURA's Niche

PROCMURA is the sole Christian organization in Africa that is dedicated to building bridges of understanding and promoting mutual respect between Christians and Muslims in the entire continent.

As the sole program of the Churches in Africa that stretches a hand of friendship to the Muslim community for peace and development, and recognizing that adherents of these two great missionary religions have the potential of becoming bad neighbours, PROCMURA, in spite of its Protestant roots works with all the churches in Africa doctrinal differences notwithstanding, and relates with all the Muslim groups and organizations in Africa in spite of their doctrinal or sectional differences. In fact PROCMURA works with all Christian and Muslim organizations but is subsumed by none.

##### PROCMURA'S Mission

Faithful and Responsible Christian witness to the Gospel in an interfaith environment of Christians and Muslims that respects the spirit of good neighbourliness, and Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace and peaceful co-existence.

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## **PROCMURA's Vision**

The vision of PROCMURA is to see an African continent where faith communities in spite of their differences work together for the holistic development of the human family.

## **Area of Operation**

PROCMURA's mandate is to carry its activities to the entire regions and countries of Sub Saharan Africa, and to interact with Christians in North Africa and the Maghreb so as to understand how Christian and Muslim relations live its life in those countries. In reality though, PROCMURA is well established in twenty countries in sub-Saharan Africa and has made contacts and organised occasional workshops in ten other countries with the hope of eventually bringing such countries into the PROCMURA fold. PROCMURA has established exchange programs with the Christian and Muslim leadership of Egypt and has made exploratory visits to Morocco.

## **Achievements/Experiences**

PROCMURA has in its 50 years of work successfully assisted the churches in Sub-Saharan Africa to embark on positive tolerance and acceptance of religious plurality as an African heritage, and to initiate with the Muslim communities, forums for solving conflicts between adherents of the two faiths and mutual collaboration to attend to national issues. It has done so and continues to do so through national councils of churches and PROCMURA Area (country) Committees around the continent.

In the context of the upcoming conference in West Africa, PROCMURA in its life and work, pioneered Christian and Muslim joint peace missions to the Sudan in the early 1990's and through its veterans within the Liberia Council of Churches and the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, joint Christian and Muslim initiatives emerged during a period that rebel activities created mayhem in those countries. The joint initiatives succeeded in bringing about peace in the then war-torn countries. It has through the various national councils of churches encouraged none institutionalized cooperation and collaboration between Christians and Muslims to attend to national issues such as mediating conflicts between political opponents, mitigating inter-ethnic conflicts, creating fora for solving conflicts caused by itinerant and polemical Christian and Muslim preachers etc. Some of these loose and none institutionalized cooperation and collaboration have metamorphosed to live their own lives in the growing inter-religious councils, while others continue to live in the form that they were initiated.

PROCMURA continues to accompany the Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria in their quest for solutions to the perennial conflicts in the northern part of the country, and offer advise to conflict prone situations around Africa where Christians and Muslims have been involved. Apart from its focus on the ensemble of Christians and Muslims to talk peace and live peace PROCMURA has been

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proactive in bringing together Christian and Muslim women and Christian and Muslim youth to discuss issues of common concern for example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Such program have been carried out and remain ongoing in Ghana, Senegal, Togo, Benin, The Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone and seven other countries in East and Southern Africa.

PROCMURA's success story is founded on its principle of making sure that its field workers (Area Advisers) go through formal education at least to the Masters level in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations so that they may avoid the usage of inconsiderate or offensive language in their bid to constructively relate with Muslims. In line with this policy, PROCMURA in collaboration with St. Paul's University initiated a Masters program in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations principally for Christians but also for Muslims to study together in respect of each other in the academic environment and translate that into respective living alongside each other. It is hoped that the program will be replicated in Ghana for Anglophone West Africa and Cameroon for Francophone Africa.

## Conference Rationale

The conference scheduled to take place in Accra will be the second of its kind in recent times. The last one took place in Dar es Salaam, September 1-5, 2008. PROCMURA has always held the view that Africa is a religious continent and its people, therefore, a religious people. It has always held a utopia view that if only the religious continent and its religious people were able to translate the good precepts of their respective religions into good practice then the continent will be a peaceful place to live in. The ideals dreamt about continue to fall into pieces when we recognise that inter-communal violence, and civil wars erupt from time to time thus making many wonder whether Christians and Muslims who form the majority of Africa's landscape cannot team up and work towards the prevention of violent conflicts and manage or mitigate conflicts where they arise as well as embark on peacebuilding and reconciliation. We recognise that the two religions cannot carry peace to the society unless and until there is peaceful coexistence between them.

The conference which is the second of its kind in recent times is called on account of the following reasoned assumptions:

- ❑ That Africa is a religious continent and its people a religious people and therefore sustainable peace in the continent can be achieved through religious peoples.
- ❑ That from time immemorial, Africans listened to their religious leaders and looked up to them for guidance to bring about peace in conflict situations, and that such remains the same case today, and therefore religious leaders are an asset to peace in the continent.
- ❑ That the Christian and Muslim faiths have peace as one of their central focuses and if harnessed properly, can be an asset to peace.
- ❑ That religion is an emotive issue that touches the heart and soul of the human being, and

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should not be denigrated by another since history has shown that when people's faith/ religion is denigrated they will do everything to defend it – even die for it.

- ❑ That religious extremism is on the ascendancy and something must be done to curb it.
- ❑ That Christians and Muslims for a long time talk about each other and it is high time they talked with each other on issues of mutual concern.
- ❑ That Christian and Muslim leaders can play intermediary roles in conflict situations to manage and eventually eradicate violent conflicts and bring about peace and reconciliation.
- ❑ That Churches and Mosques can work towards peace in society and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims since generally speaking, people engaged in conflict can and do profess to belong to one religious group or the other.

## **Conference Objective**

The principal objective of the conference is the creation of a forum whereby Muslim and Christian leaders of West Africa guided by experts, can openly deliberate on peace, peaceful coexistence, mitigation of conflicts and work towards reconciliation of broken societies. Working under the premise that the identification of factors that promote and exacerbate situations of none peace are part of the solution, the conference shall provide moments of sharing so that as many views as possible are gathered in terms of problem identification as well as their projected solutions.

## **Participants**

As a pilot program, participants shall be drawn from Christian and Muslim religious leadership of Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Gambia, and Burkina Faso. PROCMURA's workers from these countries and its Central Office staff shall be in attendance.

## **Expected Outcome of Conference**

It is expected that after the conference the Christian and Muslim leaders will accelerate their quest for peace in the different countries from which they come and in the entire region with the hope that this will be the norm in the entire continent of Africa.

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## Annex II

### THE ACCRA COMMUNIQUÉ

We, 60 Christian and Muslim religious leaders from ten (10) West African States that include Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo met in Accra, Ghana under the auspices of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) on the theme: "*Religion and Prevention of Conflict, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*" at the M-Plaza Hotel, from July 20-24, 2009.

HAVING deliberated on such issues as: Religious Leaders as Agents of Peace, peace between the religions as a prerequisite for religious leaders to promote peace within the wider society, negative religious expansionist policies, the politicization of religion, globalisation/internationalisation of conflicts, negative solidarity, the challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life, causes of conflicts, and advocacy for peace by example;

HAVING received Case Studies on Christians and Muslims Collaboration for Peace from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte D'Ivoire, and Nigeria;

AWARE that religion and religious differences have always been exploited for political, economic, communal and personal interest which have caused the deaths of thousands of our brothers and sisters and the destruction of properties;

VERY CONCERNED at the violent confrontations in our individual countries carried out by some of our followers;

RECOGNIZING that there are some positive improvements in Christian and Muslim Collaboration for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation;

UNDERSTANDING and ACCEPTING that as Religious Leaders we must at all times be Agents of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation and must live by example;

DO HEREBY RESOLVE and reaffirm our willingness and determination to continue to remain in solidarity with each other in the furtherance and sustainability of Peace, Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in the West African region in Particular and Africa in general;

ACCORDINGLY, as Religious Leaders coming from the two major Religions in the West African region, and representing millions of persons of faith,



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## **RESOLVE as follows:**

- ❑ That we would lead by example and take responsibility to Promote Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in our region;
- ❑ That we would embark on a campaign to create awareness and sensitization within the religious communities to promote positive religious tolerance for peace and peaceful co-existence;
- ❑ That we would respect and appreciate each other's religious values, beliefs and practices;
- ❑ That we would collectively engage national governments, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and along with our counterparts in the various regions of Africa, the African Union (AU) to urge for responsible governance and democracy.

## **CALL ON RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

- ❑ We call on all Religious Leaders to continue to be Prophetic and proactive at all times without fear or favour;
- ❑ We call on religious leaders to be politically impartial and refrain from partisan politics so as to ensure that we play effective roles as Agents of Peace Justice and Reconciliation;
- ❑ We call on the followers of our respective religions to complement each others efforts for peace in society and peaceful co-existence among themselves and avoid negative tendencies which has the propensity for conflicts;
- ❑ As both Holy Books (the Bible and Qur'an) place emphasis on Peace, that as religious leaders we practice Peace in fulfilment of the tenets of our respective religions.

## **CALL ON GOVERNMENT**

- ❑ We call on Governments and Political leaders in the Sub-Region to practice good and responsible governance and guarantee peaceful transitions from one duly elected government to the other;
- ❑ We appreciate and thank those governments that have created an enabling environment for dialogue with religious leaders, and call on others to create the same;
- ❑ We call on Governments to ensure that Child and Drug trafficking be eradicated within the Sub-Region;

We as Religious Leaders have adopted the above and have resolved to continue to work together to promote positive religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence, addressing Peace, Justice, Healing and Reconciliation.

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Done in ACCRA, Ghana this 24<sup>th</sup> Day of July 2009.

**Signed on behalf of all the participants:**

BENIN, BURKINA FASO, COTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, LIBERIA, NIGERIA, SENEGAL, SIERRA LEONE, THE GAMBIA and TOGO

**Attested by:**

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), All African Conference of Churches (AACC), Fellowship of Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA), and World Council of Churches (WCC).

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## ANNEX III

### **ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HON. CLETUS AVOKA ON BEHALF OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA, H. E. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA TO THE WEST AFRICA CONFERENCE OF THE PROGRAMME FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA (PROCMURA), HELD AT THE M-PLAZA HOTEL, ACCRA, FROM 20<sup>TH</sup> TO 24<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY, 2009.**

Bishop Chairman of the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), the World Council of Churches President for Africa, The Deputy General-Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Secretary-General of the Fellowship of Councils and Churches in West Africa, the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana and all other General Secretaries, Heads of Churches, the National Chief Imam of Ghana, other Imams, Sheiks, Christian and Muslim Scholars, Conference Delegates, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We as a country deem it a great honour to play host to this all important Conference on the theme '*Religion and Conflict Prevention, Peace-building and Reconciliation*'.

We salute PROCMURA for this all important Conference and are happy that the Christian Council of Ghana agreed to host it.

For us as a Government, PROCMURA's choice of Ghana as host for this conference, in our view, can be dubbed "HOME-COMING" and indeed a historic one.

We say it is historic for a number of reasons. First, is that the organization is 50yrs old.

The second is that it comes with a program which Ghana and the West Africa sub-region in particular needs most, that is conflict prevention, peace-building and reconciliation.

The third reason is that it is not a gathering of ordinary people but of religious leaders who wield large followings in Africa, in general, and West Africa in particular and whose role as peace-builders cannot be overemphasized.

We recall that Liberia and Sierra Leone which have had perennial problems of conflicts due to rebel activities were brought to order; and peace prevailed in those countries as a result of the initiatives of Christians and Muslims. In Liberia for example, when the civil war took an insurmountable turn for the worse the religious leaders came together to lead the warring factions into talking peace before ECOWAS leaders intervened. The example of Liberia was later replicated in Sierra Leone during the latter's civil war where the now Anglophone West Africa Regional Coordinator of PROCMURA played a leading role.

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Furthermore, when the Program decided in 1997 to send a five-member delegation on a peace mission to the Sudan, West Africa contributed three people. Of the number, I am proud as a Ghanaian to say that Ghana sent two people in the persons of Mrs. Esther Dordoe and the late Dr. Abdallah Botchway, then of the University of Ghana. The Program in addition to the above led in negotiations between conflicting factions: as for example during an inter-ethnic conflict involving Dagombas, Nanumbas and Konkombas in the Northern region of Ghana in 1994. It took the Ghana Area Committee of PROCMURA, which works within the Christian Council of Ghana to mobilize the religious leaders in the country to travel to the north to broker peace and understanding.

Similarly, the same body of the religious leaders led by the Christian Council of Ghana managed to bring peace and understanding to Christians and Muslims in Sekondi, Kumasi, Tamale and in Wa, all in Ghana. Bishop Chairman, the above confirms my conviction that working for peace is inherent in the religion, no matter the brand i.e. be it Christian, Muslim or whatever ref. p. 3. Religion has a divine mission to work for peace. It is this sense of divine mission to work that motivated the late Pope John Paul II, in the wake of September 11 2001, to invite as many as 200 religious leaders representing nearly all the religions of the world and from all corners of the globe to Assisi, Italy in January 2003 “to pray for the end of conflict and the promotion of true peace, and to declare before the world that religion must never become a cause of conflict, hatred and violence”. See Pope John II, Angelus 18<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

Distinguished participants, at the recent gathering in Assisi, there were 3 representatives of African Traditional Religions, namely Okomfo Afua Serwah a fetish priest from Ghana, and Chief Ainadou Gasseto, High Priest of the Avelekete Vodou, and Mr. Alexander Andre Paqui both of Benin. Chief Ainadou delivered an interesting paper at this event. In my humble opinion therefore, the presence of representatives of African Traditional Religion (s) at such high powered gathering like this one is no small an acknowledgement of their role in the quest of religion for world peace. In other words, how often do we Africans take cognizance of the role of African Traditional Religions in matters beyond the folkloric or cosmetic?

Honourable delegates notwithstanding the above positive role religion has played, it is also, a fact, indeed a worrisome fact, that religion has unfortunately come to be associated with many of the conflicts and very long protracted wars in several parts of the world. For example the 4 centuries old war in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants, the seemingly endless war in Sudan between Muslim North and Christian-Animist South and of course the mother of all religious conflict the Israeli-Palestinian war in the Middle East. Violence and conflicts and war are at variance with religion and whatever God stands for. They are the results of human passion, unfulfilled desires and aspirations of the human heart. Coming back home, we are witnesses to the intermittent clashes between Muslims and Christians in Northern Nigeria. In Ghana the Dagbon conflict is mainly between

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many adherents of Islam.

Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me at this stage to make this observation: is violence not paradoxical to religion? Against the backdrop of the above experiences permit me to make another observation that whereas the well organised religions seem to have given rise to violent religious conflict and war in humanity, the traditional religion as found in Africa, South America and Asia etc seem not to have been the ferment for any such conflicts. In other words, the often referred to as superior religions must learn from African Traditional Religion in the quest for peace and in the work of peacebuilding among peoples.

Bishop Chairman, the Government and people of Ghana appreciate the positive role of the religious and traditional leaders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in our country. Government has consequently put in place the National Peace Council headed by an eminent religious leader, Cardinal Appiah Turkson with Amir of the Ahmadiyya movement in Ghana Wahab Adam and other eminent rulers.

Following the protracted Dagbon conflict the government put in place a committee of eminent chiefs led by Otumfuo the Asantehene to resolve the conflict. The Peace Council has performed efficiently in trying to resolve conflict and build peace between belligerent factions. The government is in the process of enacting the legislation to establish the Peace Council and give them more powers functions and authority to deliver.

Lastly let me observe here that some of the causes of these local conflicts in our country can be attributed to ignorance, illiteracy and poverty and wish to use this forum to appeal; to the religious authorities to assist Government in addressing these issues through literacy education, public awareness creation and employment generation opportunities for the youth. The devil finds work for idle hands but if the youth are productively engaged, I believe the incidence of conflict and violence will be reduced significantly.

Coming to the sub-region my understanding is that in all countries where PROCMURA has area committees such committees have frequently run awareness creation seminars, workshops and training program for followers of the two religions to foster collaboration and peaceful living within the same area.

At the individual level West Africa has provided the largest number of Council Chairpersons to PROCMURA than any other region on the continent. From the late Bishop Kelli of Sierra Leone whose term ended in 1993, to the late Very Rev. Daniel O. Tetteh (1993-2000, Ghana) and now Bishop Josiah Idowu Fearon (2003 to date, Nigeria), we in West Africa can only be thankful to the program for giving us the opportunity to serve it.

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I am further informed that West Africa has produced a number of regional coordinators in the persons of the Rev Dr. Johnson Mbillah (1989-1993, Ghana), the Very Rev. Dr. Nathan I. Samwini (1997-2000, Ghana), Rev. Dr. Fola Lateju (2000-2003, Nigeria), Rev. Dr. Kwami Sidza (Togo), Mr. Paul Sai (Benin), Rev. Dr. Desiré Adrake ( 2003 to date, Togo). As if to say the above contribution was not enough Ghana's son, the Rev Dr. Johnson Mbillah became the first African General Advisor to the Program.

With all this contribution we in Ghana can only be humbled for our role in the development of PROCMURA in the past 50 years. But the saying is true that to whom much has been given much is required. Let us therefore strive to make Africa a continent devoid of conflict as we forge ahead in unity.

I hope that we as a region can continue to render such enormous services to the program as long as the Lord gives us breath.

Long Live Africa, Long Live West Africa, Long Live Ghana, and Long Live PROCMURA.

I thank you for your kind attention. GOD BLESS US ALL!

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# ANNEX IV

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS OUTLINING CONFERENCE FOCUS REV. DR. JOHNSON MBILLAH, GENERAL ADVISER OF PROCMURA

### 1. Introduction

The Chairperson, Rt. Rev. Dr. Josiah Idowu Fearon, the Vice Chairperson of PROCMURA, Pastor Isaac Bodje, the World Council of Churches President for Africa, Rev. Prof. Dr. Simon Dossou, the Deputy General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Mr. Bright Mawudor, the Secretary General of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa, Rev. Tolbert Thomas Jallah, our host, the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe, General Secretaries and Chairpersons of the various Christian Councils, Imams, Sheikhs, and Scholars from the various countries represented here, PROCMURA Executive Committee members, Chairpersons, Regional Coordinators, Women leaders, Area Advisers, my colleagues from the PROCMURA Central Office, ladies and gentlemen.

We in the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) are humbled by your response to our invitation to come so that we may reason together on matters of peace in the countries from which we come, peace in the sub-region, and peace in Africa which is our wider home.

As we all may be aware, situations of non-peace usually do not come in one day and go away in one day. It has its incubation period and the time that it hatches. In other words it starts slowly and then gradually explodes.

### 2. Religious Leaders as Agents of Peace

We have come here as religious leaders to deliberate on how to work together to prevent violent conflicts, build peace where peace is broken, and to bring about reconciliation where strife exist. Our coming together as religious leaders is based on our firm conviction that:

- ❑ Africa is a religious continent and its people a religious people. Therefore sustainable peace in the continent can be achieved through the contribution religious people, especially Christians and Muslims who form the majority of Africa's religious landscape.
- ❑ From time immemorial, Africans listened to their religious leaders and looked up to them for guidance to bring about peace in conflict situations. The situation, by and large remains the same today. Religious leaders, therefore, are an asset to peace in the continent.
- ❑ The Christian and Muslim faiths have peace as one of their central focuses and if such are harnessed properly, they can be an asset to peace.

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- ❑ Religion is an emotive issue that touches the heart and soul of the human being, and should not be denigrated by another, for history has shown that when people's faith/religion is denigrated they will do everything to defend it – even die for it.
  - ❑ Religious extremism is on the ascendancy and something must be done to curb it.
  - ❑ Christians and Muslims talk about each other and it is high time they talked with one another on issues of mutual concern.
  - ❑ Christian and Muslim leaders can play intermediary roles in conflict situations to manage and eventually eradicate violent conflicts and bring about peace and reconciliation.
  - ❑ Churches and Mosques can work towards peace in society and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims since people engaged in conflict can and do profess to belong to one religious group or the other.

### **3. Peace between the Religions as a prerequisite for Religious Leaders to promote Peace within the wider society.**

There is evidence to suggest that Christian-Muslim relations in Africa faces a number of challenges relating to peace and peaceful coexistence which need proactive measures to attend to them, if we have to make our message of peace acceptable to all others. These challenges can be looked at in four broad areas:

- a. Negative religious expansionist policies
- b. The politicisation of religion
- c. Globalisation/internationalisation/importation/ exportation of conflicts
- d. The challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life

#### **3.1. Negative Religious Expansionist Policies**

The well known fact that Christianity and Islam are the two great missionary religions in the world today means that the two religions are competing for membership and for space to practice their respective faiths. Sub-Saharan Africa appears to be the region where the two religions are growing faster, perhaps than anywhere else in the world. The methods employed to make converts are without a guiding ethic, and therefore give room for some preachers from both sides of the religious divide to use inconsiderate, and in some cases offensive language to propagate their religion.

Negative perceptions of Christians and Muslims of each other's religions, drawn from medieval polemics between Christians and Muslims, for example, are deployed by these provocative preachers. These methods are known to breed conflict, which in many cases usually degenerate into violent



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confrontations. In some countries in Africa including West Africa there are itinerant preachers who use both the Bible and the Qur'ân in public preaching against one another. Some simply condemn the other's religion. Such provocative preaching creates animosity, poisons relations, and lead to violent conflicts. In some places, radio stations of particular religions condemn the other's religion. Instead of the preachers saying how good their religion is, they rather say how bad the other's religion is.

### **3.2. The Politicisation of Religion**

The use or misuse of religion by politicians for their partisan political ends is well known. There is a growing trend in African politics whereby adherents of one religion or the other vote for political candidates not because they have good development policies, but simply because they share the same religion. In a similar vein, it is a well-known secret that certain political appointments in Africa are made not because of the competence of an individual but rather for the sake of religio-political correctness or to appease/influence one religious group.

Ethnicism or what people choose to call 'tribalism' is known to have militated against the unity of nations and communities. While efforts are being made in African countries to minimise ethnicism or 'tribalism', the current situation suggests that if measures are not taken, ethnicism could be minimised and what we in PROCMURA coin as 'religious tribalism', would take over. Since religion can be an emotive issue, 'religious tribalism' if allowed to take roots, could be more challenging if not dangerous for the unity of communities and nations.

### **3.3. Globalisation/Internationalisation/Importation/Exportation of Conflicts**

The universality of Christianity can ordinarily be seen by the fact that Christians are spread throughout the globe. On Christian solidarity in a spiritual sense, however, the universality of Christianity is seen by the Christian understanding that all Christians belong to the body of Christ – the Church. This concept means that all Christians everywhere and anywhere belong together in a mystical union that transcends political borders, colour or race. In Christ there is no east, no west, no north, no south, no white, no black etc.

The universality of Islam is also seen by the fact that Muslims are spread throughout the globe. The unity of Muslims, however, is seen in terms of the Islamic concept of the universal *Ummah* (Community) which Muslims everywhere and anywhere belong. This form of unity is understood to be both temporal and spiritual and thus transcends established borders of nation-states/countries. In the *Ummah* there is no east, no west, no north, no south, no white, no black etc.

#### **3.3.1 Negative Solidarity**

An upsurge of religious particularism influenced by the concept of Christians belonging to the Body of

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Christ and Muslims belonging to the universal *ummah* have militated against the unity of nations and the quest for common citizenship that would enable neighbours to live together in peace. The perception that the European West is Christian, and the Arab East is Muslim has created a situation where conflict between the West and the Arab East is perceived to be conflict between members of the Body of Christ (Christians) and members of the *Ummah* (Muslims). This was more pronounced and almost became the norm in some parts of Africa during the Gulf War of 1991, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Danish cartoon saga in 2006. In Nigeria (the northern part), for example, Christians and Muslims literally slaughtered each other and burnt down worship places. Participants will have examples to give from their own areas.

In a situation as described above Christians and Muslims had exercised negative solidarity. They had imported conflicts outside Africa into the continent. If this negative solidarity was to become the norm, conflicts anywhere could be exported or otherwise imported to countries that in terms of physical proximity are far away from the conflict zone. What we have said so far make us ask questions on African identity. It is true that the average African has multiple identities. One may say for example that I am a Kusasi of the Gbani clan, a Christian of the Presbyterian Church denomination and a Ghanaian by nationality. Multiple identities of this nature mean that people sometimes shift loyalties in different situations. But how does this play itself when nationals of a given country rise up in arms against one another over a war fought far away?

The critical question for Christians and Muslims to ask themselves is whether Christians in Africa regard themselves as African Christians or Christian Africans? In the same vein do Muslims in Africa see themselves as African Muslims or Muslim Africans? We need to conceptualise this even when it comes to our own countries. Are we Sierra Leonean Muslims or Muslim Sierra Leoneans and for that matter are we Burkinabe Christians or Christian Burkinabe? Though there are deep theological considerations on this, we still have to consider whether we are Africans who happen to be Christians and Muslims or Christians and Muslims who happen to be Africans. In the broader sense we have to ask the question whether we are Christians and Muslims who happen to be human beings or human beings who happen to be Christians and Muslims. The way in which we answer these questions will definitely assist us to consider what we have in common as we seek to talk, live, and promote peace with one another and with the wider society.

We need a deeper understanding of religious differences that would enable us to understand that it is possible to be truly African and truly Muslim or Christian and thus live peaceably with one another and collaborate for peace within the wider society.

The past and immediate fallacy of the emerging trend of religious particularism that sets the African against his own kind in the name of the Body of Christ and the *ummah* is that in the West, Christians have fought wars against fellow Christians (the Body of Christ) as evidenced by the two world wars,

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and Muslims have fought wars against fellow Muslims (the *Ummah*) as evidenced by the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980's.

Christians and Muslims leaders need to openly discuss the universal nature of their religions so as to ensure that Africa is not accused of importing so many things into the continent to the extent of importing conflicts into their environments and therefore fighting proxy wars.

### **3.4. The Challenge of Translating Good Precepts in Religion into Good Practice in Every Day Life**

As we have said earlier, In this presentation Christianity and Islam wield the largest numbers of adherents in Africa when it comes to a head count of people of religion one needs no scientific census to come to that conclusion. Adherents of the two religions are always at pains to convince all others that they are religions of peace. Christianity, for example, argues that the advent of Christ was announced with the angels' song 'Peace and goodwill among humankind' (Luke 2:14), thus indicating that the Christ who was born brought peace to human beings. In fact Jesus is referred to as the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6).

Muslims on the other hand have always passionately explained that the word Islam, which translates as submission also has in it '*salaam*' which means peace. In fact the normal routine greetings of Muslims '*as salaam aleikum*' (peace be upon you) with the response '*aleikum salaam*' which literally means unto you also peace denotes this. This greeting of the Muslims is not any different from the Judeo-Christian greeting of *shalom* (peace).

If the two religions which have the largest following in Africa are religions of peace then one would expect the continent to be experiencing peace. This is certainly not the case as conflicts shoot up in many parts of Africa including the countries represented at this meeting. We need no reminding that there has been violence of major proportions in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Guinea Bissau, and of minor proportions in Nigeria, Togo, among others.

What all these situations as described above mean is that either the ideal precepts of peace embedded in Islam and Christianity have failed to influence lives or the leadership of Church and Mosque, and by extension Christians and Muslims have not been doing enough to ensure that the ideals of their religion are not mere theoretical concepts. This is a challenge that religious leaders gathered here will need to seriously look into.

## **4. Causes of Conflicts**

On causes of conflict, it is well known that Christian and Muslim leaders join politicians in describing

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causes of conflict as: social, economic, political, struggle over resources and for livelihood and so on.

Much as these are core issues in any conflict, Christian and Muslim leaders should not shy away from asking the question why such conflicts sometimes assume a religious colouring leading to Christians and Muslims fighting against each other and in some places Mosques and churches set ablaze. We should not always sound escapist by attributing all the conflicts to any other cause except religious differences. We need to be objective and frank since the identification of the real cause of any given conflict is part of its solution.

Having said these, I am aware that there is also the danger of stereotyping, demonising and criminalising a whole religious community as the source of conflict. 'See what the Christians are doing...', 'See what the Muslims are doing...' while the participants in the conflict are a small segment of the religious groups and their actions may not necessarily be motivated by their religious beliefs or be shared by other members of their religious group.

## **5. Advocacy for Peace by Example**

Working towards peace as Muslims and Christians requires having peace among the two religious groups before engaging other actors including state actors. If I may give an example here. In the late 1990's there was simmering conflict in Ghana between the then ruling Party of former President Jerry John Rawlings and the then opposition party led by the immediate past President John Agyekum Kufuor. During the same period itinerant polemical Christian and Muslim preachers created violent confrontations between Christians and Muslims in some parts of the country. The political situation in the country was so tensed that the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Muslim Representative Council among others, invited the political leaders to broker peace between the feuding political factions.

In his opening remarks the then President Jerry John Rawlings asked the religious leaders whether they and their membership were themselves at peace with one another so as to come and teach political actors about peace. He asked the religious leaders to go back and reconcile themselves, and their followers who engaged in violent confrontations and come back to reconcile them who are political leaders. Unless they did that, he argued, they had no moral authority to broker peace between politicians.

The example we have put forward suggests that unless Christians and Muslims consciously talked and lived peace they would have no moral authority to broker peace between politicians and any feuding factions. In other words, unless and until Christians and Muslims are at peace with one another as religious communities, they have no right to engage in peacebuilding and conflict transformation with other actors.

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## 6. Conclusion

I have in this presentation highlighted issues for reflection and commented as I went along on issues that are not on this paper. In concluding this paper, it is worth emphasising that Christian and Muslim religious traditions (like other religious traditions not represented at this meeting) can speak of the peace elements in their different faiths. The question therefore is not whether or not the various traditions have peace and peaceful co-existence in their teaching, but whether such high values are put into practice. The truth of the matter is that it is not so much Christianity and Islam which creates situations of non-peace but those that bear the labels of Christianity and Islam – in other words Christians and Muslims. It is Christians and Muslims who interpret their respective scriptures of the Bible and the Qur'ân to promote peace or misinterpret it and call for war.

People of faith can promote peace and peaceful co-existence in the continent if they do not only talk about peace but work hard towards the securing of peace and endeavour to live in peace with one another. To collectively do this require people of religion to talk with each other as we do now and will do in the next few days and not just about each other. It is in talking with each other that we can cooperate and collaborate, exercise positive tolerance, and constructively engage one another to help Africa to see itself and its people as a unity in variety. That unity can then link-up with the common humanity of the human family worldwide.

In many of our African societies (especially at grassroots levels) families live together in the same households with intra-faith and inter-faith differences. They eat together, work together, celebrate the diverse religious festivals together, share in the joys of birth and the sadness of death, and jointly work towards the development of the community. This phenomenon, which I have always described as practical theology of religious plurality brewed in the African pot, demonstrates the innate African spirituality that focuses on existential matters and has thus become the bedrock of African religiosity which is live and let live with our religious diversities in harmony. This is one of the models that PROCMURA operates on, a model that we can all contribute to the nations.

If our assertion that in Africa, people of faith continue to listen to their religious leaders and in most cases take directives from them is anything to stand by then Christian and Muslim leaders gathered here have to take advantage of this in their collaboration with other leaders across the faith divide to bring about peace in a continent yearning for peace.

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# ANNEX V

## CONFLICT TRENDS AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA

By Emmanuel Bombande<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The 14-year Liberian Civil war started on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1989 when Charles Taylor launched his first attack with the objective of overrunning Monrovia. The Government of Samuel Doe repelled the attack and as the fighting forces dug in, it became apparent Liberia had entered a long and protracted civil war that will not be contained within its own borders. This compelled the intervention of the Inter-Faith Mediation Council (Muslims and Christians) who convened their first meeting in Sierra Leone in early 1990. This first meeting was an important initiative by Religious leaders in Liberia and West Africa.

In reference to the theme of your conference; “Religion and Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation”, the critical question we must ask is this; when should the Inter-Faith Council of Liberia have intervened in the Liberia crisis? At the time the Council had their first meeting, could they have prevented the Liberian war? I make reference to this concrete example in order to challenge you as Religious leaders to become more proactive in conflict prevention and to widen your own understanding of your roles in conflict prevention. I will come back to the case of Liberia later in my reflections. We all know however that despite the good initiative of the Religious leaders in Liberia, the response to that crisis was through the ECOWAS intervention with the aim to enforce peace under ECOMOG. The ECOMOG intervention started in August 1990, eight months after the crisis had escalated into full blown war. Since ECOWAS had no choice but to intervene militarily to stop the carnage, the intervention itself also increased human suffering. When the opportunity to mediate a settlement began, the mediation effort also became more difficult as the warring party who had gained some territory was preoccupied in a self interest power based negotiation to acquire power and not a genuine interest based negotiation to the end the war.

How do Christian and Muslim leaders work together to prevent violent conflicts, build peace, and reconcile peoples in West Africa? This is the question implicit in the theme “*Conflict Trends and the Role of Religious Leaders in the Prevention of Violent Conflicts in West Africa*” that I have been asked to address in this very important conference. I chose the concrete example from Liberia with the initiative of the Inter-faith Mediation Council not to in any way minimize the very important work they initiated during the Liberia Civil War. I use this example to present the argument that Religious Leaders have a very important role to play in prevention of violent conflict. The question however is

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when do they engage to prevent conflict? Is it after war has escalated such as the example of Liberia? Let us first of all interrogate the concept of conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention is a broad concept which refers to the anticipation and aversion of escalation of violence in social, political and international conflicts. The basic assumption is that we do not work to prevent conflict because that is unrealistic. The challenge is to prevent the violence and destruction that is a consequence of conflict. How do Christian leaders contribute to this effort? I will make reference to some of the conflict trends in West Africa and maintain the focus on the role of Religious Leaders in violent conflict prevention.

In the keynote address of the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, the underlying principle that came out strongly was that you “cannot give something to someone that you do not have” In other words, Religious leaders cannot be peacemakers when they themselves are not in peace and do not have peace to bring to our communities. It is for this reason we argue in peacebuilding practice that human community and relationships are not static but ever dynamic, adapting and changing.

Conflicts impacts situations and changes things in many different ways regrouped under four categories; the personal, the relational, the structural and the cultural. In order for us to be effective in preventing violent conflicts, transformation must be happening at these four levels. The emphasis at the personal level is that we minimize the destructive effects of social conflict and maximize the potential for growth and well – being in the person as an individual human being at physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels<sup>2</sup>.

In some communities of our sub-region, religious differences in the past and the current have often been a cause or a pretext for violence and war. In these challenges, the role of religious personalities such as Pastor James Wuye and Imam Ashafa from Nigeria demonstrate that religion can be a potent force in encouraging the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Is religious violence a trend in West Africa? Is it not amazing that the countries to the west of West Africa, Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea experience high levels of religious tolerance while the same cannot be said of Northern Nigeria. Indeed we observe religious strife across Chad through Sudan to the Horn of Africa. The question we must ask is: *‘How do we create structures for healthy Muslim and Christian relations to emerge?’* PROCMURA is one such structure that must be supported in building and enhancing inter-faith dialogue to prevent the potential of religious intolerance and violence.

## Recent Trends

The roots of conflicts in many African states can be found in ethnic and religious cleavages in society reinforced in some countries by regional divisions created by colonial rulers. In Nigeria for example,



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British colonial administration left a young state in 1964 that was deeply divided along regional, ethnic and religious lines.

Having successfully gained independence, the building of nation states in West Africa have been wrought with challenges. The meaning of independence was for the people of the emerging new states to carry their own destinies into their own hands and enhance human development on all fronts. This quickly became an illusion. The concept of good governance as we talk about them today was nonexistent in the immediate post independence years. In many countries, new leaders became the political elite and nothing really changed in leadership except that the colonial masters were no longer in charge. There was no transparency in governance. Corruption became the order of the day. The national development agenda did not take into account the well being and human security of all the people. Instead the patronage system became the order of the day. The leadership crises in many states created grounds for nepotism and cronyism where family or ethnic ties held the key to securing good jobs, or even for the owning of national resources. This has led to a lack of a national vision, with tribal identity seen as all-important and conflict along these lines all-too-often occurring. We see the challenge of the management of resources, perhaps most clearly in Nigeria, where there are many accusations of the national resources being exploited by the political elite. Who you know in government and how well one is connected made it possible to become wealthy, have access to resources, scholarships for children etc. In the patronage system, the lives of ordinary people in the communities were determined by the centre of power in the capital cities. (Old lady in Kenya) As the majority of people became disillusioned, the conditions were created for military interventions and the forceful over throw of governments. Peaceful transition from one government to another became difficult and in some cases resulted in violent conflicts. This trend has continued in different forms up to today. Religious leaders must engage at this systemic level of advocating for social justice for all in order to be good at conflict prevention. You cannot wait to intervene after violence has erupted from such social injustice.

When there is structural injustice in society, the moral leadership of religious leaders must speak up and demand justice for all. When Religious leaders become conspicuously silent, they are perceived to have compromised their integrity and solidarity with the victims of injustice and joined those who use power to exploit the weak. This often does not only result in a lack of trust by the majority of people but the political landscape is deeply polarised, undermining any efforts at building national unity for accelerated development while creating an environment of general insecurity. In the post independence years, many governments responded by using the resources of the state to protect the state (Government) from any form of threat. Security was then skewed in which the security of the state became a national interest as defined by rulers rather than ensuring human security in which the state would be protected as long as the well being and welfare of the people became the



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national preoccupation. The patronage system also extended to special and privileged relationships between the ruling class in some states and the powers of the former colonial masters. Bilateral relations in such systems only benefited the few with connections to the ruling class. We are now suffering the ripple effects of bad governance which is an underlying fault line of conflicts in many countries fifty years after many African states gained independence.

One of the key challenges of our region is the management of peaceful transitions, by which I mean the process of democratic elections, which must be free and fair to gain the confidence of the people. Ghana has been basking in the limelight of international appreciation for the conduct of good elections and peaceful transitions. President Barack Obama affirmed this with his recent historic visit to Ghana and yet it was not all that rosy in the last elections in Ghana. We came close to the brink but thanks to the local capacity to anticipate such challenges and work to overcome them, Ghana's elections in 2008 were not only peaceful but have brought economic dividends to Ghana following the elections. In all West African countries, the voices of religious leaders is now needed more than ever before to ensure that the people can freely and transparently choose their leaders without any intimidation. Governance issues around elections and transitions from one government to another could become the next underlying issue that could bring many West African countries into conflicts. As you exchange ideas during this conference, do not forget that in some countries, there is apprehension in some countries that Presidents are preparing their sons to take over power from them. In Niger, President Tanja has dissolved Parliament and the Constitutional Court for the simple reason that these state institutions will not support his bid for a third term. Everyday, the people of Niger are mobilising against Tanja attempts to perpetuate himself in power. Where are the prophetic voices of the religious leaders in that country? It is no longer possible for presidents to rule for life. Term limits are part of good governance. We cannot say today we do not have the early warning signs of possible violence about to occur in Niger. The challenge is how to stop this potential for escalated violence. Religious leaders have a role to prevent violent conflict in Niger.

There are challenges of poverty and under-development in our nations, with conflicts over resources - sometimes the rich fighting to acquire more - often-times the poorer simply struggling to stay alive and feed their families. Peace and development go together as the old adage of the chicken and the egg. For there to be development there must be peace, yet peace is very difficult to achieve if there is not economic progression. Good leadership that is visionary is what is needed to eradicate poverty.

More recently our region has seen the rise of drug trafficking and movements, that was previously more prevalent on the South American continent. New routes have been created to North America and Europe through West Africa, undermining state sovereignty and creating vast income for illegal gangs, often heavily-armed, which also creates huge insecurity for governments. These are some of the security questions and trends of our time. What do religious leaders have to say about such

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things? What is their role? We now return to the main question:

*‘How do we create structures for healthy Muslim and Christian relations to emerge?’  
What is the role of Religious leaders in the prevention of violent conflicts and building peace?*

As we mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, the Inter-Faith Mediation Council of Liberia provided a good example of a positive response to the Liberian civil war. We must not forget however, that this intervention came rather late even if it served a very important purpose, coming as it did in the year following the start of the civil war. When do we engage in dialogue and mediation or the work of conflict prevention? Before the April 12, 1980 military coup d'état that brought Samuel Doe to power, Liberia was experiencing systematic exclusion and marginalisation of “indigenous Liberians” from political governance, economic resources and more importantly, the sense of human dignity and belongingness (Liberians of various ethnic groups would narrate how you had to change your name from a local name to that of Americo-Liberian in order to belong to the privileged class of Americo-Liberians in order to be able to read law in the university or work in a bank etc.) This was the time and period that dialogue in Liberia should have started. Liberia badly needed dialogue for social, economic and political transformation and inclusion of all Liberians in national development. While the work of the Inter-Faith Mediation Council has been appreciated, the violence of self-destruction in Liberia for 14 years could have been prevented if dialogue began much earlier. The Inter-Faith Mediation Council could have provided the safe spaces for such dialogue in the absence of a national legitimate structure. The Inter-Faith Mediation Council would have been also the voice of the voiceless in a society where social injustice was gradually accumulating towards implosion.

What have we learnt from the case of Liberia? Given the lack of strong political and social institutions, the church or mosque and their clerical hierarchies and laypeople play an important function in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. They define values, social goals and the preservation of national unity. In Ghana, civil society worked with eminent religious leaders during the difficult phase of the December 2008 elections to ensure a peaceful transition. Some of the prominent religious leaders serve on the national architecture for peace; the National Peace Council (NPC).

Interfaith relations can provide two aspects of conflict prevention. First, working together to prevent intra and inter-religious conflicts and secondly, ensuring that Interfaith initiatives work to prevent violent conflicts in general. We must work toward ensuring that our interfaith relations and communities are working to anticipate and prevent violence rather than reacting to escalated violence. Interfaith leaders should be prophetic voices on any issue where injustice abounds, where there is a lack of participatory governance, where corruption is rife, where peaceful existence is too difficult even to imagine, these leaders are looked upon for their inspiration and wisdom by many.

There is a high moral demand on the religious leader. They are seen to be a voice for the voiceless.

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Where children are oppressed, their strength is needed, where society does not liberate women, their calls for freedoms are sought. Where leaders do not care for their people, their actions can shine through.

The more that religious leaders are seen to be speaking up against injustices, the more their society values them. When they are not speaking up against such things, then when serious conflicts erupt, their voice has no credibility and they are not in a position to act as intermediaries.

How can leaders develop the skills to be good mediators? We know that conflict resolution is a specialized social science discipline that requires study and training to develop the correct skills. Religious leaders must not assume that the position they hold within their community and their availability is the extent of the qualifications that they need to play a positive role for peace and conflict.

The purpose of a religious leader must extend beyond that of evangelisation. For too long leaders have pursued their own narrow interests, and it is in this context that President Obama argued that:

*“Human history has often been a record of nations and tribes - and yes, religions - subjugating one another to serve their own interests. Yet in this new age, such attitudes are self-defeating. Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail.”<sup>3</sup>*

Religious leaders must therefore; play an important role for peace and stability in our nations. Rather than just seeking to evangelize, religious leaders must be judged on how they are building the holistic sense of knowledge amongst their communities, and on how they are implementing their moral mandate to intervene in conflicts to build peace and reconcile communities torn apart by hatred and vengeance. These leaders must be good at understanding the deep under-lying reasons behind conflict. They must be analytical and have a comprehensive perspective. “Do religious leaders ignore sources of tension? Can they accept the responsibility of facing up to long-standing issues, perhaps in the face of unpopularity and a loss of power?” These were some of the critical questions President Obama raised in his Cairo speech.

When talking of religions we can never neglect to mention the ways that they interact with those of other religions. In his recent speech in Cairo, President Obama reminded us that:

*“So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than the co-operation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.”<sup>4</sup>*

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President Obama was of course speaking firstly of the relationship between America and Islam, but his statement holds true for Christian-Muslim relations also. He points towards the need for co-operation, for focusing on shared values, as opposed to teaching of religious leaders that could focus their teachings upon what they are not. We must seek to define ourselves by those positive things that we stand for, and never seek to be defined by our opposition to another group of people; this will lead only to conflict and unrest.

As we have already noted, we currently see conflicts around religion the further east we travel from Nigeria, caused by violent extremists. But what is the origin of the motivation for conflict? Is extremism towards other faiths an intrinsic part of any religion? Or could it be that religions are manipulated, used as an excuse, for those who wish to continue a circle of hatred? Is it possible that religion is used by some to steal and then consolidate power?

What is the teaching of the great religions? When speaking of Islam, Obama reminded us that:

*“The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind.”<sup>5</sup> Quran5:32*

And what is the teaching of Christianity? We could point to the words of Jesus when he exhorted his followers to: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”<sup>6</sup> Or when he taught that “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”<sup>7</sup>

When we talk of Christianity, a growing trend that is worrying for our cause is the so-called prosperity gospel being preached by certain leaders, who expound the theory that those who are loved, chosen, and elected by God, will also be blessed materially. Therefore suggesting that those who are not enjoying material wealth are not saved, and are then labelled as those who are ‘weak in faith’.

Is a return to the teachings of Jesus not needed in such a situation? The teachings, that talked so much of giving to the poor, or strength for the weak and the importance of humility? It seems to me that these teachings are about human development goals, peace to our humanity and peace to the world.

I believe we have a problem when religious leaders who focus on the importance of purity do not include a holistic sense of morality that includes interpersonal relationships and caring for those in need, rather than caring solely about one’s own purity and judging others. Christian leaders should perhaps be reminded of Jesus teachings in regards being on the side of the poor.

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## Conclusion

Finally, we observe the efforts of President Obama's Administration to shift American Foreign policy towards recognition amongst others that religion is important and that it is a factor in the national politics and international behaviour of some countries and regions. This was underscored by the Cairo speech in June redefining relations between the United States and the Islamic World. There is a new opportunity for more cooperation between Religious leaders from different faiths to make our world a better place to live in. It is now urgent to heal the wounds of hatred in our communities, in our countries, and in West Africa. It is time following all the wars that have killed and maimed from community to national level to reconcile people and promote human security for national development. You have a leadership role in this effort. With God always on our side, I know you will succeed.

Thank you and God bless you.

## Footnotes

1. Emmanuel Bombande is a Peacebuilding Practitioner, a co-founder and Executive Director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)
2. For a detailed understanding of the concept of conflict transformation, read Conflict Transformation by John Paul Lederach in the Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding. Good Books. 2003
3. President Barack Obama, excerpt from speech at Cairo University, 4 June 2009
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Holy Bible, Luke 6: 27-28
7. Holy Bible, Matthew 5: 8-10

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# ANNEX VI

## THE ROLE CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM LEADERS PLAYED IN THE SIERRA LEONE PEACE PROCESS: SHEIKH ABU BAKARR CONTEH AND REV. MOSES KHANU

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the background to the Role of the Muslim-Christian collaboration in the Sierra Leone Peace Process, a brief historical sketch, the historical antecedents to the conflict, the nature of the conflict and an overview of the historical religious cooperation in Sierra Leone.

The early history of Sierra Leone can be understood in terms of the waves of migration of both the people and the religions in discussion.

The people that migrated to what is now Sierra Leone were originally from the tropical zone of the mountainous region of what was known as Futa Jallon. As early as 1462, the Portuguese claimed to have discovered Sierra Leone but never colonized it.<sup>1</sup>

Rather, Sierra Leone was colonised by the British in 1808. After 153 years, Sierra Leone gained her independence on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1961.

Sierra Leone is located in the West Coast of Africa. It is bounded on the north and East by the Republic of Guinea; on the South and west by the Atlantic Ocean. Sierra Leone covers an area of about 27.925 square miles or 72.925 square kilometres. The population is about 5.2 million (2004 Census)

The decade long conflict broke out on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1991 and was officially declared over on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2002 there are eighteen (18) tribal languages but the official language is English.

When the slave trade was abolished by the British Parliament in 1808, the freed slaves were resettled in Sierra Leone as a chosen “Province of Freedom”, in three stages. The first was in 1787 (411 freed slaves), 1792 (1, 190 freed slaves from Halifax, Canada and the last and final resettlement was in 1807 (about 50,000 recaptured slaves).<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 Historical Antecedents to the Sierra Leone Conflict

When we talk about the decade long conflict, two questions would quickly come to mind. How did a one time peace loving nation like Sierra Leone become engulfed, seemingly overnight in war? What events may have occurred in the history of the country that caused the conflict to take place? The answers many people would give to the above questions vary from “bad governance” and the bad

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history of the nation's past of greed, corruption that characterised the post colonial and independence period.

Another reason or answer is the blatant and illegal way politicians and other greedy persons handled the country's diamond wealth. The role of external actors was another key factor to the conflict.

**a. The Colony and Protectorate**

During the colonisation of Sierra Leone, the Colonial masters created two nations in one, the Colony (Capital–Freetown) and the Protectorate (Large Provincial) had two separate laws and administration. People in the colony enjoyed social political and economic development and access to vital resources and service deliveries. The two entities bred deep ethnic and regional resentments.<sup>3</sup>

**b. The Era of Party Politics**

In 1947, a new National Constitution was proposed and amalgamated the colony and the Protectorate into a single political entity; but divided there elite representatives into opposing factions, each dedicated to protecting the interests of its own people. These factions gradually formed themselves into narrow, regionally based political parties, with little or no national political agenda. Party politics became the greatest obstacle to national development, cohesions and identity. Party allegiance became just as divisive as ethnicity.

The 1962 elections then revealed the depths of ethnic and regional polarization in Sierra Leone and the superficiality of the ideological differences between the opposing political parties. The two big parties were unfortunately labelled as “Southern” and “Northern” Parties respectively.

**c. The Aftermath of the 1967 Elections.**

Though the All People's Congress won the elections, the Sierra Leone People's Party refused to concede defeat. The standoff resulted into a military *coup d'etat* and counter-coups. When civilian governance took back the reigns of government, sustained corruption, nepotism, plundering of state resources and assets became the order of the day. The government adopted a one-party constitutional government in 1978. Any semblance of accountability or effective political opposition had already been eliminated and buried. Up to the time of the decade long conflict, no political party or government made any conscious effort to address the debasement of the post-independence politics, political divide and economic situation of the nation.

Some of the reason advanced for the conflict in Sierra Leone include bad governance, excessive poverty, political marginalization, greed, lack of separation of powers, over

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centralized governance denial of the independence of the judiciary, lack of the enforcement of the rule of law etc; caused and sustained the conflict. It is safe then to conclude that all the administrations of the post-independence period contributed to the structural and proximate context that led to the conflict in 1991.<sup>5</sup>

#### **d. The Military and political History of the Conflict**

The activities of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) during the conflict could be divided into phases.

In the late 1980's, a small group of would be revolutionaries formed a nascent program for change, which included the training in Libya. The intention was supplanted by a deviant militant agenda that was spearheaded by Foday Sankoh, who elicited support from foreign contacts. This group conceived plans to organise and lead an armed insurgency into Sierra Leone.

The Military and political events can be divided into three phases. Phase one deal with conventional target warfare 1991–93. It was characterized by inter-factional fighting and capture of territories.

Phase two deals with Guerrilla warfare 1994–1997. Attacks spread throughout the country.

Phase three describes the power struggles and peace efforts, 1997–2001. The conflict was officially declared over in 2002.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2 The Nature of the Conflict**

When we examined the nature of the conflict, it was neither based on religion, nor on ethnicity, but was on economic and political. The atrocities meted against civilians were of general in nature.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) divided the violations into three overarching categories as follows:-

- (1) Violation of abduction
- (2) Mistreatment Violations
- (3) Economic Violations

In general some of the violation included amputations, forced recruitments, cannibalism, forced labour, assault, torture, rape, arbitrary detention, looting and extortion, arson and general destruction of properties.

Tribal Civil Defence Forces came into existence to defend their communities.



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### 1.3 Alleged External Actors

The conflict in Sierra Leone attracted external support, positively and negatively.

The TRC mentioned external support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), from Libya, Liberia and Burkina Faso.

The countries that helped the Sierra Leone Government include: the International Community, Britain, Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana, Togo, etc.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.4 The Historical Overview of Religious Cooperation in Sierra Leone

Before Islam and Christianity came into Sierra Leone, the people had their own belief systems.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, Islam was spread in West Africa through trade and through the Almoravides and Muslim Du-at (Preacher of Islam). Also the Arab Muslims of North Africa carried out Trans-Sahara Trade to the Sahel (the shores of the desert sea). Islamic clerics and traders began to influence the development of political and cultural institutions in the hinterland of Sierra Leone.

J. Spencer Trimingham in his book, *Islam in West Africa* observed the, “Islamic characteristics of community and spirituality were evident throughout the hinterland of Sierra Leone and periphery of what became the Colony.

When Islam was being introduced in Sierra Leone, it did not mean a sudden break away with the past as a condition for acceptance.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the encounters of Islam and Christianity in Sierra Leone can be understood in terms of phases and in a spirit of “acclimatization”.

Christianity encountered an acclimatized or in other words, an Islam that had decidedly relinquished the irritant ambition of an “Arabized” faith. Therefore, both Islam and Christianity assumed a historical flexibility and tolerance toward each other as imposed on them by the host environment.<sup>10</sup>

In Sierra Leone, social functions and religious festivals are generally celebrated and observed by both Muslims and Christians. It could be through exchange of foods, gifts or personal participation.

Christians and Muslims mix freely in daily life, and in every field of human endeavours and activities, such as in the market places, commercial or public transports, at places of work, in business, in politics.

No designated political party was exclusively for either Muslims or Christians. Most Muslims send their children to Christian schools due to their outstanding performance and better learning.

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There is hardly any provincial family in Sierra Leone that does not have a mixture of both Christian and Muslim relatives.

Interfaith marriages are common events in Sierra Leone.

Another point that is worthy mentioning in terms of inter-faith cooperation is the incident of the Late Bishop Michael Kailie who was manhandled and molested by the then Secretary of state South, Gabriel Manni and his Officers. The Military Officers invaded the premises of the late Bishop and accused him for not cleaning the compound. The bishop and his clergy men were beaten up mercilessly. They were later hospitalized.

When the news reached down into Freetown both Muslim and Christian leaders assembled at the foreground of the Council of Churches, and collectively registered with dismay and protest to the Head of State, Captain Valentine Strasser at State House. After the meeting with the Head of State, he removed the Secretary of State and recalled him to Freetown. Some Muslim Leaders opined that, "Today is a Bishop, tomorrow it could be an Imam", so the "holy alliance" yielded dividend and created more mutuality between and among Christians and Muslims.

## **1.5 The Challenges then and now**

Some of the challenges then included the suspicion and hidden fear from religious leaders of both communities. Fear of uncertainty about the secret plans or hidden agenda of members of the other group.

- ❑ The other challenge is the criticism of other religious leaders, either calling their colleagues who members of the Inter-Religious Council as compromisers of their faith.
- ❑ Financial support is another challenge that challenges the sustainability of the Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC SL).
- ❑ Some of the key Leaders have publicly become politically partisan
- ❑ After the civil conflict, the religious leaders lapsed into deep silence and failed to speak with one voice.
- ❑ Fanatic individuals in Islam and Christianity showed some non-tolerant behaviour. The "Burning of the Church at Rogbok near Mambolo, North of Sierra Leone is one of those examples.

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## **1.6 The Role of Procmura in Sustaining Religious Collaboration for Peace in Sierra Leone**

Since the work of PROCMURA was established in Sierra Leone in the early seventies, a great impact has been made through workshops and seminars.

A large member of Pastors and Evangelists have been trained on sharing your Faith, Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, Women of Faith Issues: such as inheritance, Inter-faith marriages, etc. Other trainings for Church Workers on peaceful-co-existence have been conducted.

## **1.7 The Women's Role in the Peace Process:**

The Women's Coordinator, Mrs. Hannah Mallah continues to sensitize the Women of Faith through Workshops and Seminars for Women in Freetown and at the regional level.

Current issues, such as HIV/AIDS, Teenage Pregnancy, enriching your marriage, understanding my neighbour and many more are some of the topics used to capacitate our women folks and religious leaders.

## **CONCLUSION**

Religion has come a long way. PROCMURA has also come a long way in enhancing, equipping the people of God toward peaceful co-existence, tolerance, reconciliation and the love for one another.

May God the creator give us eyes to see the needs of our society and the love God Almighty has bestowed upon all of us.

We thank you!

The Sierra Leone delegation.

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## **ANNEX VII**

### **CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM LEADERS COLLABORATION FOR PEACE IN LIBERIA:**

**By Dr. Benjamin Dorme Lartey GENERAL SECRETARY, Liberian Council of Churches  
and PROCMURA Executive Committee Member.**

#### **General Introduction**

Our Societies are becoming more intricate in the face of Globalization. Religious people and their leadership are being called upon once in a moment to redefine their religious doctrines and dogmas against the background of new trends of societal norms that are being evolved through human rights justification. Human rights are very important issues to all humanity but placed in its context with Globalization, we as religious people must be careful how we tread its path.

Indeed conflicts are as a result of human right abuses in Liberia and the rest of the Continent, Christians and Muslims working together can identify the challenges that we are faced with in Conflict Management, Peace-building and Reconciliation. Listing out a few from our present experience in Liberia

- ❑ ethnic diversities
- ❑ land disputes
- ❑ bad governance
- ❑ corruption & impunity
- ❑ marginalization
- ❑ human rights abuses

Religious people should stand for Justice, equality; preach values that are fair to humankind's existence and challenge governments to fear and respect God. Systems that brew conflicts should be challenged. We want an Africa that is free of tribal conflicts, faith-based conflicts; we want a peaceful Continent where youth, women and men will begin to focus only on building and making Africa a heavenly place to live for her peoples.

There are more than 16 ethnic groups dispersed in the 15 Counties of Liberia and we can categorize them in 5 blocks according to the level of a particular religious dominance over and against another; what we may term as Liberia's religio-graphy:

- ❑ Christian dominance- Montseraddo, Margibi, Grand Bassa, River Cess, Sinoe, Maryland, Grand Kru, River Gee, Grand Geddeh
- ❑ Christian-Islamo dominance- Bong, Lofa, Nimba

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- Islamo-Christian dominance-Cape Mount, Bomi, Gbarpolu

All blocks have some external influences that come through their faith and cultural values from countries and ethnicities across the borders of Liberia. This is what makes sub-regional and continental programs as such to be unique. Religion is a strong force in Liberia and the rest of Africa. There is a recent incident in Liberia where an unnamed prophetess got on the air and requested that everyone should draw water and save it for use; for the next day, all wells and water sources in Liberia were going to turn into blood. Almost the entire population through the length and breadth of Liberia woke up through out the middle of the night to draw water. The problem we are usually faced with is how can we access the input of the religious leaders within these blocks to bring some integration amongst them and their communities? Reconciliation has not been fully achieved as at the moment in Liberia's post war reconstruction effort.

## **PROCMURA**

Institutionalized existence in Liberia can be traced back to 1983 when the Liberian Council of Churches hosted the Consultation of Church Leaders from the Sub-region in Monrovia to study the issues of co-existence of Christians and Muslims in Liberia<sup>1</sup>. The activities of PROCMURA however became overshadowed by the political events that characterized the beginning of the prolonged conflict in Liberia. PROCMURA resurfaced in 1999 where Church Leaders in Liberia were called upon to study a way forward for a sincere approach for collaboration between the Christian organizations and Islamic ones. An Area Committee was formed in 2002 and its affairs coordinated by a trained Interfaith Adviser. The Adviser ran the day to day program activities of the Area Committee.

The Committee has so far successfully implemented the following projects:

1. In October 2002, the Committee staged a forum for the sensitization of the Christian Community on Christian-Muslim relations, which was attended by 300 Church Leaders. This was held at Life Tabernacle on Benson Street, Monrovia.
2. In December 2002, the Committee conducted a Church Leaders Sensitization and awareness program on Christian-Muslim Relations, which was attended by 40 Clergy persons from the Christian Community in Liberia. This was held at Brown Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, on Benson Street, Monrovia.
3. In August 2004, the Committee conducted a workshop on Awareness on the art of Christian-Muslim relations at the First United Methodist Church in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. 40 persons benefited from the training.
4. In November 2004, the Committee conducted Meetings with the conflicting parties in the October 28, 2004 Conflict between Christians and Muslims in Jacobs town, Paynesville.

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5. In March 2006, a team from the Central Office of PROCMURA, facilitated two (2) workshops; HIV/AIDS prevention techniques with Christian and Muslim Youths in Liberia. 30 youths were trained. Christian-Muslim Relations in the Liberian Context was the theme for the working of 30 Christian women from the Churches in Liberia at the LCC House.
  6. In November 2007, the Committee launched an Inter-religious dialogue and consultation for 30 religious leaders on conflicting issues of national concerns to them at the LCC House.
  7. In March 2008, the Committee conducted a Religious Leaders consultation on Global warming and Climate Change, at the Corina Hotel in Monrovia. 75 persons attended.
  8. In April 2008, in collaboration with the Catholic Archdiocese of Monrovia, the Committee had a three-day retreat for 100 youths/students with different religious backgrounds to discuss on religious tolerance and co-existence.
  9. In January 2009, the Committee in collaboration with the Advisor to the President of Liberia on Religious Affairs facilitated a Consultation of 30 religious Leaders on Peace and national security at the LCC House.
  10. In May 2009, the Committee in partnership with PROCMURA Central Office organised a sensitization and awareness program on Christian-Muslim Relations in the Liberian Context for 50 Church Leaders at the LCC house.

Christian-Muslim Collaboration in Liberia for Peace and Advocacy for the Cessation of Hostilities among warring Parties from 1990-2003 (1990-2003)

Christians and Muslims have continued to collaborate on the search for reconciliation and healing in Liberia. Amidst the crises/conflicts a collaboration alliance between the Liberian Council of Churches and National Muslim Council of Liberia was formed for mediation and transformation of the conflict which became known in 1990 as the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee. Though with many challenges, the IFMC successfully led in the management of the conflict till election was held 1997 and the conflict developed another dimension.

One of the main focuses of the LCC, to begin with, was to create confidence among the Liberian people and to avert a growing notion that the war (1990) was between Christians and Muslims, as the call for *jihad* seemed to suggest. Bishop Arthur Kulah who was a lead person in the work of the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), and who understood the ideals of PROCMURA and its guidelines, recognised that the only way forward was to unite the leaders of the Muslim community to work with the LCC.

The LCC through the Bishop's leadership eventually persuaded the Muslims to join them and together they formed the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC). The principal objective of the IFMC was

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to negotiate peace between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) Gbarnga Government led by Former President Charles G. Taylor and the Interim Government led by Dr. Amos Sawyer which was considered the Monrovia government.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Kulah further noted that though the formation of the IFMC was a major achievement in Liberia because it helped to keep the war from degenerating into a religious one, it was widely criticized by both conservative Christian and Muslim groups. The Christian group felt the IFMC had given too much recognition to the Muslim community who were after all a minority,<sup>3</sup> while the conservative Muslim group on their part simply did not want mixing with Christians to do anything.

The greatest opposition of the IFMC came from the NPFL who noted that the leaders of the Muslim Community who were members of the IFMC were Mandingoes, arch enemies of the Nimbaians who were themselves die-hard supporters of the NPFL.

The success of the election in 1997 had many of the warring factions transformed into political parties in the race and the NPFL/NPP won; the role of the religious Leaders automatically changed from mediation and conflict transformation to conflict prevention therefore leading to the modification of the IFMC to the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL).<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned, the 1997 election process did not end the conflict in Liberia neither did the 2005 electoral processes. What the religious leaders have been doing from 1997 to 2003 have been managing the conflict until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) was signed.

From 2003 to 2005, the religious leaders initiated another process which was aimed at consolidating the Peace in both Liberia and neighbouring countries of the Mano River Union thus setting the atmosphere for the 2005 elections that brought the first democratically elected female President in Africa, Md. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The Church was involved in civic/voter education, and observed and monitored the elections.

From 2005 to present, the religious leaders amidst some rather daunting challenges have still maintained their work in partnership to proactively engage the communities in Peace-building.

### **Some highlighted Events of the IRCL (1990-2003)**

- ☑ Won the Desmond Tutu Peace Award
- ☑ Formulated the framework, which formed the basis for the ECOWAS PEACE PLAN for Liberia (cease-fire, round table conference, peace-keeping force and security among others) all leading to 1997 general elections in Liberia.



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- ☑ Sponsored and effectively staged a mass stay-home action on March 9, 1995 and February 15, 1996 respectively, demanding disarmament before election.
  - ☑ Successfully launched a Civic Disarmament Campaign to assist in disarmament, repatriation and resettlement programs immediately after the February 15, 1996 civil action.
  - ☑ Issued several position statements regarding the peace process and the violation of human rights.
  - ☑ Co-sponsored a workshop on “The Protection and Reintegration of Liberia’s War Affected Children” in October 1996.
  - ☑ As a religious institution with broad-based constituencies and national credibility, Inter-Religious Council of Liberia enjoyed the support of the Liberian people.
  - ☑ Intervened in the Mandingo/Lorma Crisis, in Lofa County.
  - ☑ Intervened in the Mandingoes/Gio and Mano crisis in Nimba County.
  - ☑ Held several workshops on Religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence throughout the country.
  - ☑ Sponsored a symposium for civil organizations, political parties, religious institutions, youths and women groups to galvanize views and opinions of prevailing situations in the County and the Sub-region; and presented a comprehensive document to the Government of Liberia for a way forward.
  - ☑ Held consultative meetings with the Religious Community of Guinea and Sierra Leone respectively and signed communiqué with both Leaderships of the Religious Communities of Guinea and Sierra Leone to foster cooperation and collaboration on peace, security and reconciliation in the sub-region, which has now culminated into the West Africa Inter-Religious Councils Coordinating Committee (WAIRCCC) comprising: Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Benin. Dr. Benjamin D. Lartey of Liberia currently serves as Coordinator of WAIRCCC, and Madam Mariama Sow of Guinea as Deputy Coordinator.
  - ☑ The WAIRCCC is supported by the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL) and the World Conference Of Religions for Peace (WCRP).
  - ☑ Held consultative meetings to chart the way forward with the Office of the European Union (EU) in Liberia, the United Nations Office in Liberia (UNOL), United States Embassy, the British Embassy in Freetown, the French Embassy in Conakry, as well as credible Civil Society Organizations in Liberia aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the ongoing fighting between the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

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- ☑ Constructively engaged both the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to resolve the ongoing hostility on the dialogue table.
  - ☑ Working closely with ECOWAS Secretariat and Parliament in strategizing a way forward for a peaceful resolution of the Liberian crisis. In this regard, the Council delivered a position statement (on the Liberian crisis) to the ECOWAS Parliament Second Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria.
  - ☑ Held Consultative meetings with both Governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea in finding a way forward for the peaceful resolution of the crisis within the Mano River Basin.
  - ☑ Facilitated a consultative meeting between ECOWAS Parliament and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

## Chronologically

- 1990            The Inter-Faith Mediation Committee was organised by the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) and the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL) during the Liberian conflict for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. The initiative of the Committee to positively transform the situation through mediation with the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) led to the Deployment of the peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) in Liberia. The Committee is credited with the formulation of the framework of the ECOWAS Peace Plan in Consultation with West African Heads of State which ended then crisis in Liberia.
- 1995-96        The Committee in collaboration with civil society initiated several non-violent engagements including stay home actions to send the message to warring factions that collective will and actions aimed at peacebuilding and reconciliation remain more powerful than use of guns. The IFMC successfully launched a civil disarmament campaign to assist in disarmament, repatriation, and resettlement programs immediately following the Stay home actions. The IFMC co-sponsored a workshop on “The Protection & Reintegration of Liberia’s War Affected Children”.
- 1997            IFMC in collaboration with local and international partners monitored the Elections in Liberia.
- 1998            The IFMC was transformed into the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) during its General Assembly.
- 2001            IRCL leaders played a key role in regional interfaith consultations in Guinea and Sierra Leone addressing issues related to peace, security, and reconciliation. Activities included

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elections monitoring, advocacy on behalf of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), advocacy to end the national and regional proliferation of arms and weapons of mass destruction, advocacy to effect demobilization of military personnel and other nationals serving as combatants per agreements signed by President Taylor and other factions as a precondition of the 1997 presidential elections. The IRCL is credited with organizing a workshop on Children's rights in collaboration with UNICEF. The IRCL interventions on behalf of students, teachers, and nurses, led to resolution of the leadership crises within the Liberian National Student Union (LINSU) to avoid national strikes and bring about equity in incentives, salaries, and benefits. The IRCL intervened with government and called for investigations to investigate related circumstances and punish the perpetrators following a series of arson attacks on mosques in parts of the country which resulted in demonstrations by Muslim students. The IRCL in collaboration with UNHCR, UNOPS, and other local peacebuilding institutions, visited Lofa County and initiated consultations with local religious, political, and civil society leaders towards ending the ethnic tensions between Mandingos, Mano, Gio, and Lorma groups.

2002-03 The IRCL is nominated to mediate peace talks between Government of Liberia and rebels and launches the formal talks that led to the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed in Accra Ghana on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 by warring factions, Government of Liberia, Political Parties and other stakeholders, thus ending the crises in Liberia.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges faced in the collaboration between Christian and Muslim Leaders over the periods under review have been basically:

- ❑ Latent conflict of interest of Leaders for political and other positions
- ❑ Intricate religious freedoms and human rights issues
- ❑ Ethnic diversities and land ownerships/litigations
- ❑ Marginalization in the processes and Methodology of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and also in the GOL implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) components on National Security and Peace-building.
- ❑ The use of critical texts of scriptures from both the Bible and Qur'an by some leaders that tend to insinuate violence, gender insensitivity, women and child abuse.

With the above challenges, a major opportunity is that the Church and the Mosque are still widely held and respected in Liberia. Religious people/Leaders are taken very seriously. Without reservation the Religious Community has the greatest propensity to impact the Liberian Society. However, this

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potential is greatly harnessed through our preparedness for collaboration with one another.

For example, after the October 2004 in Jacobs's town, Paynesville, a Network that was set up called the Somalia Drive Pastors and Churches Network, recently started a collaboration initiative with their Muslim Counterparts in the Community. They are living and working together for the development of that Community putting behind them the recent bitter past. <sup>5</sup>

## **Critical Analysis of Current Status of Reconciliation and Peace-building**

A critical analysis of the current status of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia in recent days appear to be complex. The submission of the Final Report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was created at the Accra Comprehensive Peace Talks that has the mandate to bring about healing and reconciliation has now divided the Country. Expressions from various quarters of Society including the religious and the international community has focussed on the issue of whether the Country is ready to prosecute persons who have committed crimes against humanity as well as economic crimes. Additionally, the Report has recommended that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf amongst others be ban from holding public office for 30 years. Already individuals, groups and political parties have demanded her resignation.

As a result of a protracted period of war/conflict the Liberian Society is highly traumatized. The current peace is fragile and monitored by the United Nations peace keeping force which still has overall responsibility to maintain peace. The current situations in Guinea (Conakry) and Cote d'Ivoire have the propensity to explode into civil wars if not managed properly. Events in these two countries will definitely have adverse effects on Liberia. Accordingly the need for healing and reconciliation are paramount if Liberia is to remain amongst the comity of Nations.

With the background of a people trying to rebuild their lives and Country and the need to foster unity, healing and reconciliation, the report of the TRC now leaves the debated issue of whether prosecution would foster healing and reconciliation or would bring us back to war.

The Church in Liberia under the auspices of the Liberian Council of Churches has risen to the Call of the Liberian people to ensure that peace prevails.

Engagements are on with all Stakeholders on the report of the TRC for a Way Forward. The outcome of these consultations must foster unity, healing and reconciliation.

## **Recommendations/ (What PROCMURA should do?)**

The current environment in Liberia has over the years established religious tolerance and co-existence. The Church in Liberia has taken the lead in the promotion of a culture of tolerance and co-

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existence in a country which has a majority Christian population. However recent years has seen a significant growth in the Muslim population.

Some recommendations should include:

1. The need to ensure that PROCMURA is owned by the churches in Liberia. Accordingly it is Recommended that a Sensitization and Awareness Program be launched to educate churches of the unique role of the organization;
2. That PROCMURA takes a lead role on a National Healing and Reconciliation Initiative in collaboration with the Government of Liberia and Civil Society. This is a unique opportunity!!!!!!
3. To ensure that PROCMURA roots are firmly grounded in Liberia the need to educate and train members of the church in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations is imperative. Accordingly it is recommended that scholarships be provided to train persons in the church.
4. To ensure the successful implementation of the Liberia Area Committee's Strategic Plan of Action from 2008- 2014, that PROCMURA Central Office should increase its subvention to the Committee and assist to facilitate external fund raising.

## **Lessons learnt in the Process**

Some lessons learnt in the process of collaboration and the pursuit of peace and reconciliation should include:

1. Faith-based group action can be effective in addressing all form of ills in communities
2. Christians and Muslims can work and live harmoniously in one community
3. Christian Leaders are not much informed about the doctrines/norms of their Muslim counterparts as the Muslim Leaders are about them.
4. The Leaders of LCC and Partners sponsored all the expenses during the period of the collaboration with a serious reluctance of the Muslims to share
5. The representation of the leadership of the Muslim counterpart remained static; while the Christian Leadership interchanged
6. Church Leaders and Muslim Leaders have always had the capacity to resist internal and external manipulation from interest groups, including the International Community;
7. That healing and reconciliation is a process and not an event and therefore the need for religious Leaders to remain vigilant and proactive

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# ANNEX VIII

## GOODWILL MESSAGES

### MESSAGE FROM THE WCC - COE

By Rev. SIMON. K. DOSSOU

On behalf of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev. Dr. Samuel KOBIA, I would like to greet this noble assembly, brought together in conference.

The WCC, which brings together 349 member churches and councils throughout the world, is concerned about the hearths of tension that are being seen here and there. Conflicts between religions are often considered the most difficult to manage and stop.

That is why the WCC endeavours to be proactive in the prevention of tensions where we feel they can arise.

The dialogue between Christians and Muslims is part of the grand agenda of the WCC which encourages dialogue and peaceful coexistence between Christianity and other religions including Judaism, traditional African religions and faiths from Asia.

All the religious leaders who are respected all over in their big numbers are constantly invited not only to preach on interreligious dialogue and peace but also, above all, to be promoters of dialogue and peace and be living examples to their followers/faithfuls.

West Africa which still counts numerous countries that harbour tension because of the lack of real democracy, must feel lucky to host this conference.

WCC congratulates the officials of PROCMURA for being leaders of Muslim-Christian dialogue.

In addition, it encourages them to help other continents to start such a programme in their own context.

May God bless this conference and all of you.

Rev. Simon K. DOSSOU

African President of the WCC

Accra, July 21 2009

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## All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)

By Mr. Bright Mawudor

### Goodwill Message on the Occasion of Conference on Religion and prevention of Conflict, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

Organised by PROCMURA

July 20-24, 2009 - ACCRA, GHANA

Mr. Chairman,

The Minister of Interior of the Republic of Ghana, Hon. Cletus Avoka,

All protocols observed.

On behalf of the President Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Tanzania, the General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Andre Karamaga, I bring you warm greetings from Nairobi, Kenya, the headquarters of the AACC with a membership of 173 Churches and National Council of Churches in 40 countries. My General Secretary sends his special apologies for his inability to be here in person. He is currently on a peace mission with the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches to see His Excellency President Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda having successfully concluded a similar mission last week to the Democratic Republic of Congo to see His Excellency President Kabila in an effort by the ecumenical movement to complement the work of the African Union and United Nations to resolve the conflict in the Great Lakes Region. He has asked me to assure you of his prayers and oneness with us in spirit as we dialogue on this important matter. Peacebuilding and Reconciliation is one of our core mandates from the 9<sup>th</sup> GA.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are meeting at a time of tensions between Christians and Muslims around the world-tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate and cycle of suspicion and mistrust. The effects of these tensions and the resultant wars in some cases are well known to us. But suffice it say that they have made the euphoric hopes that greeted Africa's independence in the 1960s to be nothing but a cruel mirage giving room to many Afro-pessimists to consider Africa nothing more than an accident of geography and to mock our efforts at development and unity as nothing more than a reshuffling of chairs in a titanic. One of these pessimists, Dr. Michael Radu of the Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia, USA, said: "For Africa to be counted it must put its house in order, stop blaming history and others to its backwardness, stop all the unnecessary wars and religious conflict..."

Ladies and gentlemen, the time has come for us to end the suspicion and discord if Africa is to claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and wish to be respected among the community of continents. The time has come



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for a new beginning in relationship building between Christians and Muslims: A relationship based on mutual respect and interest based on the truth that Christians and Muslims are not exclusive entities. No matter our differences, we are all created in the same image of God, breath the same air, enjoy one sunshine and seek the same for the future of our children. Our interests overlap and we share common principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all mankind. These are the hopes of all mankind and transcend nations and people of all beliefs/faiths in the cradle of civilizations.

It is on this basis that any effort to promote dialogue and understanding between the two religions as being done by PROCMURA and must be lauded, commended and complemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen: the followers of these 2 religions all share one world but for a brief moment in time. We must therefore not focus on what draws us apart but rather commit ourselves to a sustained effort to find a common ground. The Holy Koran tells us “Oh mankind! We have created you male and female and have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another and live in peace.” In the same vein, the Holy Bible tells us “Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called sons of God.” So either way, people can live in peace and that is God’s vision and command.

May our deliberations in this conference broaden our knowledge and outlook, enrich and infuse our being to the realization of the African Dream in which each individual has the opportunity to achieve his/her full potential. An African Dream in which women are not pushed to the periphery of society but instead are afforded equal opportunity to function along their men folk. A continent in which there is peaceful coexistence of populations, groups, religions, and seeing an end to obstructive religious wars and conflicts so as to debunk the thread bare notion that Africa cannot make it even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We at the AACC believe these dreams are realizable. Now is the time!

Assalaamu Alaykum!

Shalom!

Peace be unto you!

Bright Mawudor

Deputy General Secretary

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## **Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA)**

### **ECUMENICAL GREETINGS**

**Rev. Tolbert Thomas Jallah, Jr.**

**Secretary – General, FECCIWA**

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Josiah Idowu Fearon, Chairperson of PROCMURA, The Rev. Dr. Simon K. Dossou, World Council of Churches President for Africa, The Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, General Adviser, PROCMURA, Mt. Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye – Mensah, All Africa Conference of Churches Vice President for West Africa, Mr. Bright Mawudor, Deputy General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, PROCMURA Executive Committee Members, Religious Leaders, brothers and sisters.

Mr. Chairperson, let me bring you ecumenical greetings from the Chairman and Members of the Executive Committee of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA). I am actually honored to represent FECCIWA and to participate in the Consultation on Religion, Prevention of Conflict, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation for Religious Leaders in West Africa.

FECCIWA is an Ecumenical Sub – regional body owned and operated by the Churches in West African Church. It was established in 1994 to provide a forum for Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa to facilitate and promote Peace Making and Peacebuilding, Good Governance, Human Rights, Solidarity, and Networking among Christian Councils and Churches in the areas of HIV/AIDS, Small Arms and Light Weapons Control, Campaign against Gender Based Violence and Combat Corruption, Women Empowerment, and Capacity Building. FECCIWA member Christian Councils and Churches are found in thirteen of the West African States.

When Karl Marx declared back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that “religion is the opium of the people”, Marx was probably perplexed by the degree to which men and women of sound moral judgment and high intellect would, in the name of religion, permit themselves to be manipulated, exploited, and sometimes abused by a few bent on political self aggrandizement and personal economic enrichment. So Karl Marx’s analogy of the persuasive power of religion over its adherents to that of opium, the popular drug of choice for youthful indiscretion bordering on outer body experience of highness and uncontrollable excitement has been visible in many West African States today.

However, religion plays a very significant role in society as custodian of peace, love, justice, reconciliation and harmony. It is a known fact that peace, forgiveness, reconciliation are central fundamental and indispensable issues at the heart of faith for sustainable development. Based upon this premise, it is evident that reconciliation and peacebuilding are considered as major priorities of Religious Leaders in Africa.

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On the contrary, the magnitudes of destructive violent conflicts among some religions have hijacked the prospects of economic and social development in West Africa; especially in Northern Nigeria, Niger and Guinea Bassau through religious extremism.

The work of PROCMURA in some of these religious conflict zones on reconciliation, religious co-existence and tolerance must be commended in a loud voice. The work of PROCMURA is one of the most effective and durable ways to transform relationships and prevent destructive conflicts in West Africa in the name of religious intolerance. Reconciling local communities is an integral part of building peace and reducing the effects of war – related hostilities through religious institutions for a total transformation and the repairing of damaged relationships. This will be achievable only when religious leaders fully work together in a coherent manner to ensure that God’s peace reins on earth.

Finally, FECCIWA will partnership with PROCMURA in West Africa to constructively engage our Muslim brothers and sisters to ensure that conflicts that will arise between the religious groupings are fully addressed in a non- violent and peaceful manner. We must encourage our followers to build blocks of understanding of one another faith and work towards mutual respect for one another belief.

We will accept nothing less than peace, and will work with all our ecumenical partners for peace – even in environments where peace is sometimes threatened by beliefs.

Thank you all.

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# ANNEX IX

## PROGRAM FOR THE CONFERENCE

### DAY ONE – Tuesday, July 21, 2009

0700 - 0815	Breakfast
0815 – 0830	Prayers to begin the day
0830 – 1000	Welcome of participants – Rev. Dr. Fred Deegbe, General Secretary, Christian Council of Ghana Introductions
1000 – 1030	Tea Break
1030 – 1200	Opening ceremony
1200 – 1245	Refreshments
1300 – 1415	Lunch for participants
1415 – 1515	Keynote Address outlining Conference Focus Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, PROCMURA General Adviser
1515 – 1615	Plenary discussion on Keynote address
1615 – 1645	Tea break
1645 – 1800	Word of greetings (1) World Council of Churches (WCC) (2) All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) (3) Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) (4) National Chief Imam of Ghana (5) Ghana Area Committee of PROCMURA
1830	Supper and Rest

### DAY TWO: Wednesday, July 22, 2009

0700 – 0815	Breakfast
0815 – 0830	Prayers to begin the Day
0830 – 1030	Conflict Trends in West Africa

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	Mr. Emmanuel Bombande, Executive Director, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)
1030 – 1100	Tea Break
1100 – 1300	General Group Discussions
1300 – 1415	Lunch
1415 – 1600	Group Reports
1600 – 1630	Tea Break
1630 – 1830	Case Studies of Christian and Muslim Collaboration for Peace in Sierra Leone
1830	Supper and Rest

### **DAY THREE: Thursday, July 23, 2009**

0700 – 0815	Breakfast
0815 – 0830	Prayers to begin the Day
0830 – 1030	Case Studies of Christian and Muslim Collaboration for Peace in Liberia Case Studies of Christian and Muslim dynamics in the Cote d'Ivoire situation
1030 – 1100	Tea Break
1100 – 1230	Country Group Discussions on the way forward
1300 – 1415	Lunch
1430 – 1600	Plenary: Group Reports
1600 – 1630	Tea Break
1630 – 1830	Action Plan Statement of Commitment / Communiqué Evaluation Closing
1830	Supper and Rest

### **DAY FOUR: Friday, July 24, 2009**

DEPARTURES

# ANNEX XIII

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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*Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah (left) General Adviser PROCMURA introduces Hon. Cletus Ovoka, Minister of Interior for Ghana to the participants.*



*Some Participants pose for a picture with the Minister and National Chief Imam of Ghana Sheikh Usman Sharabutu Sharubutu*





*Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini, PROCMURA Area Adviser in Ghana welcomes participants to Accra, Ghana*



*Participants engage with the presenters during the plenary discussions.*



*Sheikh Mohammed of Ghana addressing the participants.*



*Cross Section of participants following the proceedings.*



*Rev. Dr. Mbillah outlining the Conference Focus*





*Participants in group discussion*



*Imam Habib Sherrif of Liberia signing the Communiqué*

*“We are here because we are a people of faith, and as such a people of peace. We are not going to talk about the theology of peace but the practical aspects of it.”*

**Rt. Rev. Josiah Idowu Fearon: PROCMURA's chairperson for the continent and Bishop of the Church of Nigeria, Kaduna Diocese**

*“It is rather regrettable that at a time when as Africans we need peace and unity to tackle and overcome the major challenges posed by debilitating diseases, poverty and malnutrition confronting our societies, we are dissipating our energies fighting each other instead of developing the little valuable assets built up from our sweat. In the process we end up missing valuable opportunities for socio-economic development and transformation of our societies”*

**Sheikh Usman Sharabutu: National Chief Imam of Ghana**

*“Ethnicism or what some people choose to call 'tribalism' is known to have militated against the unity of nations and communities. While efforts are being made in African countries to minimise ethnicism or 'tribalism' the current situation suggests that there is an emerging monster which we in PROCMURA refer to as 'religious tribalism'. If 'religious tribalism' finds an ally in ethnicism or 'tribalism' it would be more challenging if not more dangerous for the peace and unity of nations and communities.”*

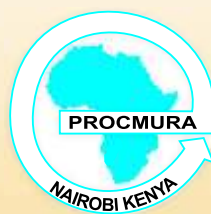
**Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah: General Adviser PROCMURA**

*“Peace is inherent in religion, we should therefore exploit it for the benefit of the community since Africa itself is said to be a religious continent.”*

**Hon. Cletus Avoka: Ghana Minister for Interior**

*“The roots of conflicts in many African states can be found in ethnic and religious cleavages in society which are reinforced by the challenges of poverty and under-development, where the poor are struggling to stay alive and the rich fighting to acquire more.”*

**Mr. Emmanuel Bombande: Executive Director of West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)**



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