



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



**CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL TRAINING OF TRAINERS'
WORKSHOP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF
(FORB)**

**24 TO 27 FEBRUARY 2020,
AFRICA HOTEL, DOUALA, CAMEROON**

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

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We, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, Experts and Consultants from the Central African countries of Cameroon, Chad, Rwanda, the Central African Republic and the West African country of Mali; meeting in Douala at Afrique Hôtel from 24 to 27 February 2020 under the auspices of Programme for Christian and Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), and within the framework of the regional Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB);

Having been vigorously taken through the following topics:

- Capacity and skills building for the promotion of FoRB;
- FoRB and Human Rights: a Legal Approach;
- Governments as an indispensable institutions for the promotion of FoRB for all;
- Situational analysis and sharing of experience on FoRB from participating countries of Cameroon, Mali, Chad, Rwanda and the Central African Republic;
- Building Christian-Muslim relations/dialogues as a mechanism for the promotion of FoRB;
- Christian and Muslim theological and existential perspectives on FoRB.

Having reflected on the particular situation in Africa with regard to FoRB while taking into account what is happening in other parts of the world;

Having worked together in focus groups with in-depth analyses enriched by specific examples from our respective countries on how we, as religious leaders, can address the issues and promote FoRB;

Having learnt that freedom of religion means many religions working together for peace and peaceful coexistence, respecting differences within and between religions;

Having understood and accepted that the FoRB is a fundamental right for every human being and that every human being has the right to practice and manifest FoRB without being censored;

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

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

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

Deeply concerned that refusal to accept FoRB can lead to violent radicalization and violent extremism which will in turn create mayhem in Africa and elsewhere;

Acknowledge that despite positive developments in Christian-Muslim relations in some countries, much work remains to be done in promoting and practising FoRB;

We do hereby pledge and reaffirm our willingness, determination and commitment to remain in solidarity with one another and to work tirelessly for the promotion of FoRB for peace in our countries and by that contribute to peace in Africa and in the world;

As Religious Leaders from the two largest religions of the Central Africa Region representing millions of followers do hereby commit ourselves:

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

TO LAUNCH A SOLEMN APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF OUR COUNTRIES AS WELL AS TO ALL POLITICAL DECISION-MAKERS:

- ❖ To recognize FoRB within the religio-cultural framework of Africa as a universal human right and to guarantee it through legal instruments for the protection of the rights of all.
- ❖ To involve religious leaders in the fight against extremism and radicalization;
- ❖ To guarantee the complementarity of the State with religions and to develop a permanent dialogue with religious leaders within the framework of the FoRB;
- ❖ To respect the principle of neutrality and non-interference of the State in religious affairs by refraining from the politicization or instrumentalization of religion for political gains;
- ❖ To Establish an effective and inclusive mechanism to combat terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism emanating from intra and/or inter religious intolerance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- We express our gratitude to the Government of Cameroon for welcoming the holding of this workshop in Douala; to the sub-divisional officer and the people of the city of Douala for the warm hospitality extended to us on our arrival and during our stay;
- Our thanks to the PROCMURA Area committee of Cameroon for having accepted to prepare and host this workshop, and to the whole religious

community of Cameroon for hailing the idea of the maiden PROCMURA FoRB ToT being held in their communities

- We very sincerely acknowledge the partners of PROCMURA, who continue to support the FoRB programme and the promotion and development of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa within the frame work of FoRB and the NORfoRB learning platform.
- Finally, we would like to thank the Central office under the leadership of the General Adviser for the technical and financial support for planning and organising this workshop.

Done in Douala, 26 February 2020

Signed

The participants