



PROCMURA Newsletter

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Cameroon
Chad



CAMEROON

Maroua, 5 - 12, January 2013

"PEACE IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR PEACE" SAYS CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS

As part of PROCMURA's commitment to ensure that the African continent which is a continent of religion works towards peace in the society and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims for the wholistic development of the human family, PROCMURA organised a four day conference for Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders from ten (10) countries. The conference under the theme **'Francophone West and Central Africa Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Initiative on Peace and Development'** deliberately targeted the Francophone Central and West African regions where political upheavals, some of which ride on religion create anxiety within the region.

Christian and Muslim religious

leaders from Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Senegal, Benin, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Cameroon came together in Maroua, Northern Cameroon to deliberate on this important theme. In attendance were PROCMURA staff and Executive Committee members from Togo, Rwanda, Senegal and Burkina Faso to support the PROCMURA Central Office team which was led by the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah and the Team Leader - Finance and Administration, Ms. Joy Wandabwa.

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NEW APPOINTMENT |



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Ms. Florence Iminza, appointed as Programme Assistant



EVOLVING A GUIDING ETHIC FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION AND MUSLIM DA'WAH

A vocation in Christian-Muslim relations is not an easy one. One of the many reasons why it is not easy is because Christianity and Islam are universal religions with universal claims that have an appeal to all human beings. These universal appeals and claims make the two religions to be mission-oriented as they seek to invite all and sundry to embrace their claims of truth about God.

For Christianity, the invitation is to anyone and everyone to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus the Christ and accept Him as one sent by the triune God to be Lord and Saviour of the world. For Islam, the invitation is to anyone and everyone to accept the absolute oneness of God (*Allah*) and the prophethood of Muhammad and submit themselves to Him (*Allah*) and thereby tread the straight path that leads to Him.

An invitation to come to God through Christ and an invitation to submit to God (*Allah*) and acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad is not the problem in Christian-Muslim relations in Sub-Saharan Africa where religious freedom generally remains the norm and not the exception. What the problem may be and definitely is, in some countries, comes when Christians and Muslims engage in fruitless and futile arguments and debates sometimes referred to in the East Africa sub region as *mihadhara*. These *mihadhara* are provocative in many ways as they tend to attack the essence of the neighbour's religion.

PROCMURA's experience around the African continent shows clearly that religion is, and can be an emotive issue that touches the hearts, minds and souls of human beings. Distant and contemporary history is full of lessons whereby people do not take kindly to any denigration of their religion. At a time that we talk about positive tolerance of religious differences and the value of religion as a transformative force in African societies, we cannot by acts of commission (still embarking on sterile and provocative religious debates) or omission (refusing to acknowledge that such debates are recipes for unhealthy relationships) and hope to have peace. Peace is not something that comes in easy. We have to work for it. In fact we have to avoid acts that lead to situations of none peace.

In Christian-Muslim relations, PROCMURA has always said that there are gatherers and scatterers. The gatherers are those who are sensitive to the essence of the different religious faith traditions and recognise them as such even if they do not agree with all or some of it. It comes in our coined phrase "we accept you as you are and not as we want you to be". The scatterers are those who think that since they believe that their religion is the one and only true religion, they will have to caricature, condemn, insult, disdain and insinuate the neighbours' religion and irritate its adherents. For these people "You are as good as you accept their religious faith otherwise you are anything else but a good neighbour".

Christian and Muslim religious leaders will have to enter into constructive discussions with practitioners, sponsors and advocates of *mihadhara* to dissuade them from casting insinuations on the neighbour's religion. For in doing so breeds conflicts which eventually could turn violent. In PROCMURA, we recognise that to embark on Christian Mission and all that it entails, and Muslim *da'wah* and all that it entails are mandatory for Christians and Muslims respectively. We, however, suggest that in preaching adherents of both religions, should talk about the good of their own and not the bad of the other.

Rev. Dr. Johnson A. Mbillah
General Adviser

PEACE FOR DEVELOPMENT | The Governor of the Far-North Region of Cameroon urges religious leaders to be agents of peace



Hon. Awa Fonka Augustine
Governor of the Far-North Region of Cameroon.

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Also present were PROCMURA partners from Mission Afrika in the persons of Thore Eklund, Arngeir Langås and Birger Nygaard.

In the official opening of this pioneer and landmark conference in the history of Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa, the Governor of the Far-North Region of Cameroon, Honourable Awa Fonka Augustine, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Cameroon His Excellency Paul Biya, welcomed participants and called on them to ensure that they carry the message of peace to their respective countries.

The General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah provided the rationale for the conference. He emphasised the importance of Christians and Muslims who form the majority of the African religious landscape to collaborate to work towards peace and development. He reiterated that if the two religious groups are not at peace with one another, the Central and the West Africa and indeed the entire continent will have no peace. He made it clear that peace is a pre-requisite for development and

that environmental friendly development is an asset of peace. Selected participants made presentations on Christian Muslim relations in their respective countries and the challenges that they face.

Consequently, there was a specific focus on the rebel activities in Northern Mali which have politico-religious as well as ethnic inclination. Its neighbouring countries which include; Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Senegal expressed concern on the implications of the conflict in Mali for the entire region if a solution is not found. They committed themselves as religious leaders to work with their governments, civil society and seek the peace of the region. Countries neighbouring Nigeria such as Cameroon and Benin indicated the awareness that there could be a spill over and pledged to work hard to ensure that Boko Haram's attacks and reprisal attacks that take place in Northern Nigeria, do not show themselves in their countries. To download the Communiqué follow this link:

http://procmura-prica.org/files/Maroua_Communique_EN.pdf

Participants from the Central African region expressed anxiety about the situation in the Central African Republic and called on the participants to do all that they can to ensure that the country was at peace. As a result, religious leaders issued a statement which was later on sent to the Central African Republic government and leaders who were at the time meeting in Libreville, Gabon for peace negotiations urging them to end the

stand-off and prevent further bloodshed. To download the message of peace follow this link:

http://procmura-prica.org/files/Religious_Leaders_Call_For_Peace_CAR_EN.pdf



Rev. Robert Goyek (left) with Sheikh El Hadj Hamadou Banoufé (right)

The host of the conference, President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon and of the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon (EFLC /CPCC), Rev. Robert Goyek and Member of the Crescent Moon Observatory of Cameroon, Sheikh El Hadj Hamadou Banoufé, expressed their delight for the opportunity to host the conference and called on participants to make use of lessons learnt to promote Christian and Muslim collaboration for peace and development in their respective countries.

In the same breath, Christian and Muslim women from Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Cameroon and Rwanda who participated, held their own meeting on women issues in Christian-Muslim relations. They appealed to governments and other State actors through a statement on issues touching on women and the girl child. To download the statement follow this link:

http://procmura-prica.org/files/Maroua_Women_Statement-EN.pdf

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT | Two PROCMURA Students Complete their Master's Degree at St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya

Since the inception of its Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations Programme at St. Paul's University Limuru, Kenya in 2004, PROCMURA has over the years built capacities within its constituencies across Africa.

In 2012, two church ministers; Rev. Daniel Dushimimana from the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda and Canon Joseph Richard Kamenya of the Anglican Church in Tanzania successfully completed their courses in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya. Currently, Rev. Dushimimana serves as the Acting Area Adviser of PROCMURA in Rwanda while Canon Kamenya teaches Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at the Anglican Bible College in Dar Es Salaam.

In principle, PROCMURA's field workers must, first, be trained Christian theologians who are further trained in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations up to a minimum of a Master's degree. This condition is set by PROCMURA to avoid a situation where its workers embark on Christian-Muslim relations in ignorance and thereby violating the spirit of good neighbourliness between Christians and Muslims.



Rev. D. Dushimimana



Canon J. R. Kamenya

PROCMURA Recommits Itself to Training of Women in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

PROCMURA has for many years been strategizing on how to strengthen its programme on women issues and Christian-Muslim relations. In order to do this effectively, PROCMURA has done what it calls "positive discrimination". It does this by ensuring that it requests Churches to nominate women theologians so that PROCMURA may sponsor their training in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations to Master's degree level.

It is in the light of this, that PROCMURA advertised and received recommendation from its Area Committee in Sierra Leone to train Rev. Bernadette Yema Kadie Massaquoi who is an ordained minister of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. She is about to complete her first year of studies at St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya. After her first year, she has to go and carry out a research in her country on the subject of Christian-Muslim Relations after which she will return to the University to write and submit her dissertation for the completion of her Master's degree.



Rev. Bernadette Yema Kadie Massaquoi



Members of the Ghana Area Committee

GHANA AREA COMMITTEE REJUVENATED | Orientation for the Newly Constituted PROCMURA Area Committee.

Accra, Ghana, 26 February - 2 March 2013

Ideally, PROCMURA always ensures that all its Area Committees go through an orientation on "What PROCMURA is and what it stands for". The aim of such an orientation is to assist all Area Committees to better understand PROCMURA's ideals and thus be able to work with Area Advisers towards assisting the Churches on the art of faithful witness 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 coexistence.

On 26 March 2013, the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah travelled to Ghana where together with the Area Adviser of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini, facilitated the Christian leaders' workshop which saw a total of seventeen (17) members in participation. During the meeting, members of the committee confirmed the election of Rev. Dr. Daniel Bruce as their Chairperson.

In addition to the deliberations, the inclusion of women in the committee was emphasised in consonance with the principle of PROCMURA to ensure that there is at least one third of women representation within its structures.

Tanzania Bishops Seek to Understand the Complexity of Christian-Muslim Relations as PROCMURA Calls for Calm.

Bagamoyo, Tanzania, 18 - 21 March, 2013



Bishops from Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) member churches

In the East Africa sub region, Tanzania is credited as one of the peaceful countries in terms of religious tolerance but of late it has been facing challenges in that aspect. Currently, there is an on-going debate on whether or not any Tanzanian can have abattoirs where animals may be slaughtered and sold in the open air market. Much

as Christians have been eating animals and birds meat slaughtered by Muslims for several years now, the controversy raged when Christians began to have abattoirs with the understanding that Muslims can eat meat slaughtered by Christians and Jews who the Qur'an refer to as "the People of the Book". This controversy led to some skirmishes. This particular issue has created relative tension between Christians and Muslims in some parts of the country.

In seeking to understand what needs to be done, the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah at the invitation of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) which hosts the PROCMURA Area Committee, addressed a three day conference of Bishops of member Churches of CCT. He called on them to exercise restraint and calm as they discuss the issue with Muslim religious leaders and the government on the way forward to maintain peace and unity of that country. Accompanying the General Adviser to this Christian Religious Leaders Conference was a senior lecturer and Head of the Department of History, Religions and Mission, Practical and Pastoral Studies at St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya, Rev. Joseph Mutei.

A QUEST FOR INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING |

How Can Christians Constructively Relate With Muslims ?

The Presbyterian Church Of Ghana Initiates A Programme For Interreligious Understanding



Participants pose for a group photo

In a move to ensure that Church leaders in the country come to a better understanding of their Muslim neighbours, which in so doing promotes constructive relations through witness and collaboration for peace and peaceful coexistence, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana organised a national training seminar that brought together Church leaders (Men and Women) and lay persons.

The moderator of the General Assembly of the Church, Prof. Emmanuel Martey, officially opened the seminar and highlighted on the importance of the seminar to the life of the ministry of the Church. He entreated participants to take the seminar seriously since in Ghana, Christians and Muslims live along with each other and they need to promote togetherness even when their faith and belief systems are not the same.

The principal trainer at the seminar was the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, who also is a minister of that Church. He took participants through the guidelines of Christian-Muslim, theological framework of such relations, practical relations between Christians and Muslims and the general situation of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, highlighting on the positives as well as the negatives. He called on the participants to work towards positive and constructive relations among Muslims and Christians in Africa. He praised the Presbyterian Church of Ghana for the initiative especially the Director of Ecumenical Relations of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rev. Dr. Solomon Sule Saa, for his commitment to ensure the successful organisation of the seminar.

In his contribution, the Chairman of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Church, Rev. Dr. Isaac Fokuo, reiterated the moderator's statements and provided concrete examples of Ghanaian families including his own where some are Christians, Muslims and African religion practitioners living with one another in peace. The Director of Presbyterian Interfaith Centre, Rev. Dr. Daniel Antwi, intimated that such seminars provide good grounds for the PROCMURA Central Office to broaden their knowledge in interfaith relations in general and Christian Muslim relations in particular.



Demolition - August 2012



First Floor - December 2012



Second Floor - January 2013



(Final) Third Floor - April 2013

PROCMURA's New Offices |

PROCMURA has embarked on a Financial Sustainability project through the support of its Partners by building a three-storey office complex. The PROCMURA Secretariat will occupy offices in one floor while the other two floors will be rented out to generate income to fund the organisation's activities.

Speaking at the ground breaking ceremony in July 2012, the Chairman of PROCMURA, The Most Rev. Dr. Josiah Idowu Fearon was emphatic when he said that the life of any organisation in Africa today, rests on its Financial Sustainability. He praised the Executive Committee and PROCMURA Central Office Staff for coming up with such a vision.

He thanked the Trustees of PROCMURA for accepting and encouraging the vision and appreciated PROCMURA's partners for their generous support and contribution towards the project. He also appreciated Oiko Credit for accepting to provide a loan for the project.

UPCOMING EVENTS: APRIL - JUNE 2013

Senegal - Christian and Muslim Youth Seminar On 'Youth as Agents of Peace'
29 April - 3 May 2013

Cameroon - Church Leaders' Seminar on 'What PROCMURA is and What it Stands for'
14 - 17 May 2013

Cameroon - Christian And Muslim Religious Leaders' Conference on Peace & Development
17- 20 June 2013

Uganda - PROCMURA's Exhibition at AACC General Assembly, Kampala
3 - 8 June 2013

APPOINTMENT

PROCMURA APPOINTS A PROGRAMME ASSISTANT



In a bid to increase efficiency in dissemination of information, diversifying its programme focus to meet its service demands, PROCMURA on 1st February 2013, appointed Ms. Florence Iminza, as Programme Assistant with specific responsibility for literature & communication and women issues in Christian-Muslim relations.

Ms. Iminza is Kenyan and holds Diploma, Bachelor's degree in Theology and a Master's degree in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations from St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya.

Prior to joining PROCMURA, she worked as a lecturer in Contemporary Theology at the African Institute for Contemporary Mission and Research. Though Anglican by confession, Ms. Iminza studied at Friends Theological College, Kaimosi, which is a Quaker seminary and at St. Paul's Theological College, Kapsabet. She lives in a Pentecostal family. Above all, she is committed and innovative in her work.

We welcome her to the PROCMURA family and look forward to her adding more value to our commitment to serve God and humanity in the field of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa.