



PROCMURA Newsletter

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IN THIS ISSUE

GENERAL ADVISER'S REFLECTION:

Politicisation of Religion and Religionisation of Politics: A Challenge For Peace In Africa (Part 1).. Pg.2

NEWS UPDATES

The General Adviser Calls on Politicians and Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders to Eschew the Politicisation of Religion and the Religionisation of Politics.. Pg.3

CENTRAL OFFICE NEWS

The Moderator of the European Liaison Committee of PROCMURA gets a taste of how PROCMURA Central Office Staff work. Pg.3

Anglophone West Africa gets a new Regional Coordinator. Pg.4

PROCMURA's Newly Appointed Programme Officer Assumes Work. Pg.4

PROCMURA'S Programme Assistant Returns after Peace Studies in Jerusalem. Pg.4

Financial Sustainability Project:
PROCMURA New Office Complex.
Back Page

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

PROCMURA sponsors Rev. Salli Ndombo from Cameroon and Rev. John Shettima from Nigeria. Pg.3

2014 UPCOMING EVENTS/ SCHEDULE:

Countries

- CHAD
- NIGERIA
- RWANDA
- SOUTH SUDAN
- BENIN
- TOGO



The General Adviser Calls on Politicians and Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders to Eschew the Politicisation of Religion and the Religionisation of Politics.

Pg. 3



CENTRAL OFFICE

Pg. 3



JERUSALEM

Pg. 4



NEW OFFICE COMPLEX

OFFICE SPACE &
CONFERENCE ROOM

| **BACK PAGE**

POLITICISATION OF RELIGION AND RELIGIONISATION OF POLITICS: A CHALLENGE FOR PEACE IN AFRICA (Part One).



The situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) where the Anti-Balaka (“anti-machete” or “anti-sword” in the local Sango language) militia who are largely non-Muslim and therefore labelled Christian are attacking Séléka “(Coalition” in Sango) Rebels labelled Muslim and the actual Muslim communities has caught the world’s attention.

PROCMURA has been inundated with phone calls and emails seeking to understand whether what is happening in the CAR is a religious war. Some ask bluntly: “Is it a Christian war against Muslims?” We have, from the PROCMURA’s perspective, always tried to explain that the situation in that country is as a result of the politicisation of religion and the religionisation of politics.

As an organisation dedicated to Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace and peaceful co-existence, it was always clear to us that when the Séléka Rebels leader Michel Djotodia (a Muslim by religion) recruited mercenaries from Chad and Sudan (who by religion were also Muslims), to fight alongside with him, the conflict was going to assume a religious label.

True to this, François Bozizé, the former president (himself a Christian) of the CAR in his determination to ward off the rebel attack played the religious card when he made it clear to the majority Christian population that Muslim forces were coming to take over the country.

In its modest attempt to stop religion being misused in the conflict, PROCMURA in January 2013, rallied Christian and Muslim religious leaders of the French-speaking countries of Central and West Africa to issue an appeal to the two factions (government and rebels) to make peace so as to prevent mayhem in the country. Read the Maroua message of peace in the Central African Republic on this link <http://procmura-prica.org/en/p=1916>

When the appeal was not heeded to, and Michel Djotodia took power by force of arms the perception of some none Muslims (especially Christians) was that the Muslims had taken over the country. On the other hand some of the Muslims perception was that it was now their time to rule the country. As these sentiments were openly being expressed, Christian and Muslim religious leaders who were deeply concerned about the polarisation of society along religious lines invited PROCMURA to intervene.

The General Adviser of PROCMURA went to the country and met with Christian and Muslim religious leaders as well as political leaders of the then new government, and laid bare to them the consequences ahead if they failed to unite and reconcile the country. Read the Bangui Briefing on <http://procmura-prica.org/en/?p=2278> and Bangui Report on <http://procmura-prica.org/en/?p=2213>.

These attempts by PROCMURA did not yield the desired results. Religion had been politicised and politics had been religionised, thus creating the mayhem we had tried to prevent.

The situation in the Central African Republic has important lessons for African political and religious leaders and may be political and religious leaders elsewhere. The lessons are simple and straight forward. Do not ever try to politicise religion or religionise politics. If you do, the consequences will be far reaching. Distant and recent history provides such lessons for the present and for posterity.

Johnson A. Mbillah
General Adviser

The General Adviser calls on Politicians and Christian and Muslim religious leaders to eschew the Politicisation of Religion and the Religionisation of Politics.



The General Adviser of PROCMURA, Dr. Johnson Mbillah has called on political and religious leaders to do all that they can to avoid dragging religion into partisan politics.

Speaking at an *“International Conference on Interreligious Dialogue for Peace, and the prevention of Conflicts and Wars in Africa”* organised by the Ombudsman of Burundi, Honourable Mohamed Rukara, and hosted by the government of Burundi in Bujumbura, the General Adviser decried the situation where political leaders use or rather misuse religion for their partisan political ends.

He reminded the politicians and religious leaders that the forefathers and foremothers of the Africa liberation movements advocated for the unity of their people in spite of ethnic, tribal and religious differences. Contrary to the ideals propagated by Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere among others said the General Adviser, some politicians of today exploit religion for their political gains.

Turning to the Christian and Muslim leaders, the General Adviser said that they were themselves not exonerated from blame since a number of religious leaders are known to be used by politicians for as is often termed ‘the Muslim Vote’ and the ‘Christian Vote’ thus polarising society along religious lines’. He emphasised that the creation of what he referred to as ‘religious tribalism’ was a dangerous phenomenon for the unity of the peoples of Africa.



Dignitaries at the conference

NAIROBI

The Moderator of the European Liaison Committee of PROCMURA gets a taste of how PROCMURA Central Office Staff work

Central Office

The Moderator of the European Liaison Committee (ELC) of PROCMURA, Prof. Klaus Hock while on sabbatical at St Paul's University Limuru made time to spend about two weeks with us at the Central Office. It was great pleasure to have him be one us even if for a short time. His simplicity as a down to earth person made it easier for staff to interact with him during our morning devotions where we always have the opportunity to say Good morning Lord and Good morning to one another.

His presence provided us with the opportunity to discuss our work ethic in the area of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa which interestingly is also part of his academic research and interest. We unfortunately could not avail to him the PROCMURA archives which remained locked until such time that we move into our new offices.

As we entreat Professor Klaus Hock to come again, so do we also call on other partners who will want to spend a week or two to learn about how we work and make time to do some research as Klaus Hock did, to come over.

As we write, Dr. Henrik Sonne Petersen of Danmission who is the person in charge of relations with PROCMURA is also here for research purposes. We shall say more about his presence with us in our next newsletter.



Prof. Klaus Hock (right) in discussions with the General Adviser



PROCMURA's Newly Appointed Programme Officer Assumes Work

The newly appointed Programme Officer of PROCMURA, the Rev Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel assumed duty at the PROCMURA Central Office in Nairobi on 1st March 2014. Appointed by the Executive Committee in December 2013 the Rev. Lesmore brings with him a vast experience from both the ecumenical and Civil Society world of work.

He is a theologian with bachelors and masters degrees in various fields which are relevant to PROCMURA's work. Perhaps the most relevant of his studies to PROCMURA is his research of the concept of just peace which he is currently completing for his Ph.D. at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

PROCMURA hopes that Rev. Lesmore will bring to bear his wealth of experience towards the realization of PROCMURA's vision and mission. We congratulate him and welcome him to what we regard as a challenging ministry in the life of the churches in Africa and indeed Christians and Muslims who seek the well-being of the continent.



Anglophone West Africa gets a new Regional Coordinator.

The Rev. Canon Joshua Mallam, Area Adviser of PROCMURA for Nigeria North Area Committee has been appointed Regional Coordinator for Anglophone West Africa region of PROCMURA.

The Executive Committee of PROCMURA made the appointment at its meeting in Accra in December, 2014. The Rev. Mallam holds a master's degree in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at St Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya.

The Rev Mallam assumed his new role in January 2014 having taken over from the Rev. Moses Khanu Area Adviser of PROCMURA in Sierra Leone who completed his six years' service as regional coordinator in December, 2013. The PROCMURA family and its stakeholders congratulate him on his appointment and look forward to working with him in the region and indeed in the entire continent of Africa.

PROCMURA'S Programme Assistant Returns after Peace Studies in Jerusalem.



Ms. Florence Iminza (photo: second on the right), PROCMURA's Programme Assistant participated in an intensive training on Women's Role in Peace-making and Reconciliation at the Swedish Theological Institute (STI) in Jerusalem. The six weeks intensive course exposed them to the reality of living and talking peace and reconciliation all the time. It also exposed her to the variety of ideas and views relating to the subject, with visual and practical examples of those who live in conflict zones and seek genuine peace and reconciliation.

PROCMURA is grateful to the Church of Sweden for offering the opportunity that helped to upgrade the training of Ms. Iminza who, apart from working on Literature and Communication, is also assigned to take charge of women issues in Christian-Muslim relations.

We have no doubt that the new skills acquired will benefit PROCMURA in its determination to ensure that women become very active in its peace and reconciliation programmes.

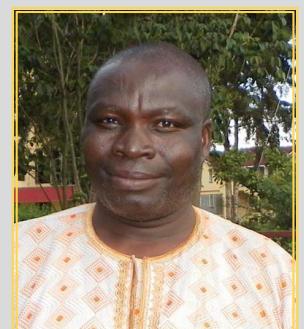
PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

PROCMURA through the support of Mission 21 and the Methodist Church in Britain have sponsored Rev. Salli Ndombo from the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and Rev. John Shettima from the Methodist Church in Nigeria for the masters in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at St Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya.

The two students joined the University in September 2013. PROCMURA takes this opportunity to congratulate and welcome them in this field of Islam and Christian and Muslim relations.



Rev. Salli Ndombo



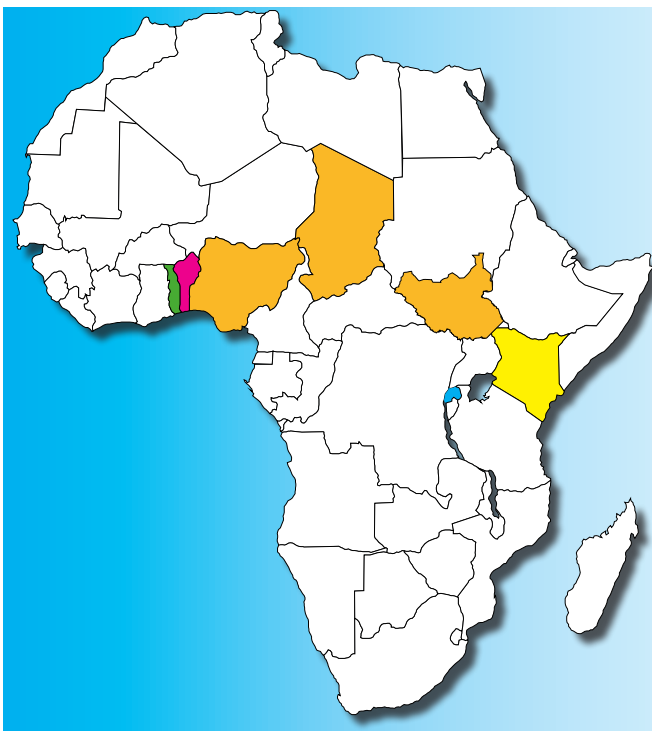
Rev. John Shettima

NEW PROCMURA OFFICE COMPLEX | WE'RE ALMOST THERE..



The PROCMURA new office space is virtually completed. Work on it tarried for some time as a result of challenges partly associated with passing on of the lead person at the contraction firm. The good news for us is that we have been able to get a tenant for the second floor and are now looking for a tenant for the first floor.

We are optimistic that come the end of May 2014, we shall move to the new building.



UPCOMING EVENTS/SCHEDULE FOR THE PERIOD JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2014

PROGRAMME	TARGET GROUP	COUNTRY
• Conflict Prevention, Peace and Reconciliation for Development	• Christian & Muslim Religious Leaders and Youth	• Chad • Nigeria • South Sudan
• Awareness Promotion and Capacity Building	• Church Leaders & Women Leaders	• Rwanda
• Capacity Building and Reinvigoration of Area Committee	• Church Leaders, Area Committee, Women Leaders & Youth leaders	• Benin
• Awareness Promotion and Capacity Building	• Women & Youth Leaders of the Churches	• Togo
• PRODUCTION OF NEW PROCMURA FLYERS & BROCHURES FOR PUBLICITY	• AREA COMMITTEES & PUBLIC	• CENTRAL OFFICE

**PROGRAMME FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA (PROCMURA), Westlands, Sports Road
P.O. BOX 66099-00800 NAIROBI, KENYA | TEL: +254 20 4445181, 4451342
Email: procmura@wananchi.com | Website: <http://www.procmura-prica.org>**