



PROCMURA Newsletter

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- WCC 10th General Assembly From (29 October - 9 November 2013)
- West Africa Islamicists, Area Advisers and Women Consultation on Christian-Muslim Relations (11-13 December 2013)
- PROCMURA Executive Committee Meeting in December Accra, Ghana (9-10 December 2013)

BANGUI | CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



“All the stakeholders need to come together and address the issues affecting our country failure to which the country may slip into civil strife.”

Hon. Aristide Sokambi
Minister for Decentralisation
and Territorial Administration

“MACEDONIAN CALL FOR HELP”

THE GENERAL ADVISER OF PROCMURA MEETS RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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NEGATIVE SOLIDARITY AS A CHALLENGE IN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT FOR PEACE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE.

Those who are conversant with PROCMURA and its work are aware that one of its principal focuses is to work towards Christian and Muslim constructive engagement for peace in society and peaceful co-existence between adherents of the two religions, towards the wholistic development of the human family and the environment.

In our last reflection, we raised pertinent issues related to the universality of Christianity and Islam with a focus on the Body of Christ and the *Ummah* and how these concepts can and have been used to violate the principle of peace-shalom and salaam. We went ahead and raised practical questions on whether Christians see themselves as African Christians or Christian Africans and whether Muslims see themselves as African Muslims or Muslim Africans.

We explained that the analogy was not the preserve of Africa but also of every continent and indeed every country, when it comes to the question of identity. The apex of the question, we contended is whether one is a Christian that happens to be a human being or one is a human being that happens to be Christian. It may be useful to read this reflection on our April-May newsletter on our website so as to appreciate our current reflection on "Negative Solidarity."

We have in a number of our presentations in Africa and beyond, described **Negative Solidarity** in the context of Christian-Muslim relations as that which propels some Christians and some Muslims to be in solidarity with their co-religionists at all and any cost. It propels them to be in solidarity even when heinous crimes that are religiously and morally reprehensible in their own religious precepts and etiquette are committed. They tend to do so when such crimes are not committed against their own religious kind - their co-religionists. In situations that we have described, such solidarity is human made and does not proceed from God (Allah). It is in fact anti-religion as it is also anti-God who is regarded as loving (Christianity) or All Merciful and Just (Islam and Christianity).

Genuine Christian and Muslim constructive engagement for peace in society and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims towards the wholistic (holistic) development of the human family and the environment as PROCMURA advocates, is only achievable when the good precepts in Christianity and Islam which have the largest following in Africa and indeed the world deal with **Negative Solidarity**. In other words when Christians and Muslims are able to 'sanction' their own when they are wrong and desist from being in solidarity with them at all and any cost - even (as we said in the last reflection) to the extent of being partners in crime.

Christians and Muslims have to work tirelessly to ensure that the good precepts of peace that the two religions proclaim loudly on the roof tops are translated into practice in everyday living and relations. It is only in such a situation that religion (Christianity and Islam in the context of our discussion) can be appreciated even by its detractors, that it holds value for the physical and spiritual development of humankind.

Johnson A. Mbillah
General Adviser



CAMEROON

Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Pledge their Commitment to Work towards Sustainable Peace and Development

Douala,

For the third time in the year, Christian and Muslim leaders gathered in one accord and purpose in Douala, Cameroon in yet another PROCMURA conference on the theme, "Sustainable Peace and Development" which was held at the Hotel la Falaise from the 13th to 16th August.

The urgency for such a conference was stimulated by the results of a similar conference organised by PROCMURA for Francophone West and Central African countries that took place in Maroua, northern Cameroon, in early January this year. The January conference had come up with resolutions to the effect that its outcome and proceedings should be replicated in each participating country. PROCMURA with its knowledge of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa had in fact preempted the need for such a conference (even before the Maroua conference) and was preparing for it.

An innovative element of the proceedings of the Douala conference which had an added value to the entire conference was a decision taken by the local organising Committee led by Rev. Robert Goyek and Sheikh El Hadj Hamadou Banoufé to begin the conference with frank and friendly discussions. The discussions centred on what each religious group does that are likely to foment conflict and disturb the current situation of peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Cameroon.

The findings were very telling as it also helped the religious leaders to put their house in order to prevent future conflict. In a nut shell the findings were replicas of what PROCMURA has identified i.e. negative religious expansionist policies, provocative and polemical preaching, negative solidarity which is embodied in the General Adviser's reflection in this bulletin etc.

In his presentation, the General Adviser made reference to virtually all the concerns the religious leaders brought forward and cautioned against polemical preaching, negative religious influences from outside that creates conflicts between Christians and Muslims, a contextual framework of understanding themselves as Cameroonian Christians and Muslims who are co-citizens working for the peace and development of their country etc.

On the question of watering down one's faith which a number of them said they had experienced in international dialogue conferences, the General Adviser assured participants that PROCMURA does not intend to create an 'omelet of religions' by fusing Christianity and Islam together to become one religion. He made it clear that it is the philosophy of PROCMURA to respect the religious otherness of the other: We relate and work together for peace and development from our respective faiths and not in spite of it, he emphasized. The General Adviser decried the situation where some Christians taught people about how to go to heaven and forget to tell them how to live in peace on earth with one another and develop their environment as stewards or viceroys (*khalifa* in Islam) of God on earth.

Christian and Muslim religious leaders made presentations related to the biblical and qur'anic concepts on peace and development. The General Adviser, Rev. Goyek, and Sheikh Banoufé were extensively interviewed by the national media on the essence and focus of the conference. In all thirty (30) Christian and Muslim religious leaders participated and benefited from the proceedings of the conference.



Participants in session



From left to right Dr. Boris Yakoubou, Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, H.E. Nicolas Tiangaye, Nicolas Guerékoyame Gbangou, Imam Oumar Kobine Layama

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC **PROCMURA's Quest for Peace in the Volatile Environment of the Central African Republic**

Bangui,

As a result of a continuous rebel activities that overthrew François Bozizé's government on March 24, 2013, and the assumption of office by the *Coup* Leader now President Michel Djotodia, an unsettled situation of violence and destruction continued in the Central African Republic.

PROCMURA's concern about the situation as it relates to its vocation was aroused by information from its contacts on the ground that there was a religious component to the violence that rocked the country and that it needed an intervention from PROCMURA. The General Adviser of PROCMURA accompanied by the PROCMURA Bilingual Assistant, Mr. Paul Mwalavu travelled to the Central African Republic on 21st July 2013 where the General Adviser held series of meetings with the Catholic Archbishop of Bangui, Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, the President of the Islamic Community in the Central African Republic (CICA), Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, and the President of the Alliance of Evangelicals in the Central African Republic (AEC), Pastor Nicolas Guerékoyame Gbangou. The three religious leaders briefed the General Adviser on the situation on the ground.

The General Adviser, well equipped with information from the three religious leaders then proceeded to meet the Minister for Territorial Administration, Decentralisation and Regional Affairs, Hon. Aristide Sokambi at his downtown office. The meeting accorded him with the opportunity to listen to the minister on the situation on the political front and to raise some of the concerns put forward by the religious leaders.

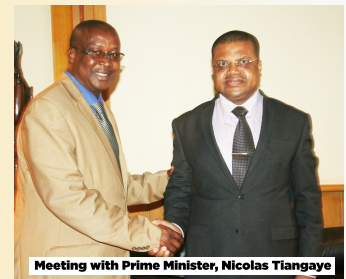
The meeting with Hon. Sokambi was followed two days later by another meeting with the Prime Minister

and Head of the Transitional Government, H.E. Nicolas Tiangaye. This meeting which was held under closed doors in the presence of the three religious leaders accorded the General Adviser the opportunity to listen to the government side of the story of what is happening in the land. It also gave him the opportunity to bring the international religious communities concern on what is happening in the Republic. Upon his return to the Central Office, he briefed the members of staff that both meetings were cordial and fruitful.

The over a week-long visit of the General Adviser to the Central African Republic was concluded with a two day conference of Christian and Muslim religious leaders on peace and development. For a detailed report on the visit to the Central African Republic follow this link http://procmura-prica.org/files/Bangui_Report_EN.pdf



Meeting with Hon. Aristide Sokambi



Meeting with Prime Minister, Nicolas Tiangaye



Participants in session



Christian & Muslim Religious Leaders Conference

GHANA

PROCMURA Encourages WAATI to Include ICMR in its Theological Studies



Accra,

The West Africa Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) celebrated its 40th Anniversary at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Kumasi, Ghana from 5th to 9th August 2013.

The celebration brought together heads of theological institutions, lecturers in theology and religious studies at secular universities, zonal chairpersons of WAATI, heads of churches, and Reverend Ministers from different denominations.

Following in the footsteps of Prof. Wim Bijlefeld, who was the first General Adviser of PROCMURA and who from his interaction with Christian leaders observed that, 'the greatest problem with regard to Christian relations with Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa was lack of knowledge and understanding of Islam'. In his 1959 address after his short stay in Numan in Northern Nigeria and in Jos the current capital city of Plateau State, he called on the church leaders to make the teaching of Islam in theological institutions a priority. The current General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah had a similar message for the participants. As one of the commissioned speakers at the celebration, the General Adviser in his thirty minutes long speech delved deep into the need for theological institutions to include the subjects of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (ICMR).

He emphasised that Christian constructive engagement with Muslims as co-citizens and as people of a religious faith is imperative in witness and building bridges of understanding for the welfare of nations and society. He informed participants of the Masters programme in ICMR offered at St. Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya and assured WAATI that as PROCMURA co-initiated the programme, it would work hard to ensure that such a programme is also initiated in West Africa.

The Very Rev. Dr. Nathan Samwini, PROCMURA Area Adviser for Ghana, who is a senior lecturer at the Kwame

Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and current WAATI General Secretary praised PROCMURA's commitment to ensure that WAATI takes ICMR seriously. He thanked the General Adviser for PROCMURA's financial contribution to WAATI.

ETHIOPIA

PROCMURA Participates at the KAICIID Conference on "The Image of the Other"



Addis Ababa,

The King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) which was founded in 2012 and based in Vienna, Austria held an African regional conference on the theme: "The Image of the Other" : Interreligious, Intercultural Education-Best Practices in Africa.

The conference was held at the African Union Commission Conference Centre, on 26th August 2013. The General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah was invited to make a contribution on PROCMURA's experience of Best Practice in Africa. Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director of Citizen and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) addressed the conference on behalf of the African Union Commission on the Christian Religious Front; the Rev. Dr. André Karamaga provided thoughts on Best Practice.

The United Religious Initiative Africa under the able leadership of Ambassador Mussie Haile played a lead role in helping KAICIID to organise the conference. The General Adviser was extended another invitation by KAICIID to make a presentation at their Global Forum on the "Global Image of the Other in Vienna, Austria. The forum which was to take place on November 18th and 19th coincided with other earlier commitments the General Adviser had on schedule.

PROCMURA remains open to working with all whose ideals and goals are part or in whole that of its own.



Women participants led in song and dance by Rev. Sophia Kisoo (second left) and Ms. Marceline Mlaa (right)

KENYA

Ripple Effect: Women in Kenya Moving from the Centre to the Margins.

Kitui,

Following the successful holding of the Christian Women Conference in Kenya on the theme “Understanding our Muslim Neighbours” that was held in Limuru in June, PROCMURA received an invitation to the Anglican Church of Kenya, Regional Women Conference that took place from 19th to 23rd of August in Kitui, Eastern region of Kenya. The conference brought together one hundred and twenty two (122) Christian women on the theme as extracted from I kings 7:9; “This is a day of Good News”.

In her introductory remarks, the PROCMURA Programme Assistant in Charge of Women Issues, Ms. Florence Iminza affirmed Rev. Sophia Kisoo who is an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Syongila Parish, for organising the conference. She said that Rev. Sophia, “had shown her courage and determination in her expediency of planning for a women meeting in her own church”.

Ms. Florence Iminza facilitated the workshop and the main item on the agenda was to formally, introduce PROCMURA, its mission and vision and what they in principle advocate for. She highlighted to women participants that learning Islam and understanding of Muslim neighbours in the church was “new to many church congregations but key in surmounting challenges that the modern Church encounters.”

During one of the plenary sessions, a participant asked “What is PROCMURA and what does it mean?” A question which presented the opportunity for Ms. Iminza to introduce PROCMURA what it is, what it stands for, its models, its philosophies and its ideologies.

Accompanying the Programme Assistant was Ms. Marceline Mwakuni Mlaa one of the PROCMURA resource persons who candidly made a presentation on “Challenges of Interfaith Marriages.”

In her presentation Ms. Mlaa pointed out the challenge of

biblical interpretation that Christian women are confronted with, when striving to live their faith. She noted that Christian-Muslim marriages specifically are complex and the possibility of providing a resolve on the tension that exists is near to impossible and as such every decision made has consequences.

In her intervention, Ms. Iminza on the other hand unravelled and challenged the conscience of women, once in a while drawing from the Christian precepts in trying to elaborate the Islamic principles that can be used as points of convergence as opposed to divergence. She did this by showing how the Islamic beliefs and practices can be understood vividly as to break the rife in the community among Christian and Muslim women.

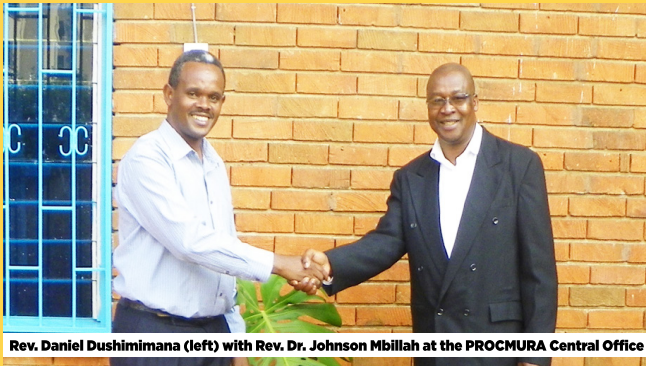
At the end of the day, facilitators and organisers left the conference not only feeling inspired for a greater mission but also redrawing their itinerary to meet the growing needs in an attempt to quench the thirst for knowledge in Islam among Christian women.

Ms. Lynnette Shaha from Kilifi County, one of the women leaders who participated at the PROCMURA women conference in Limuru was not left behind; In her report, she pointed out that, on one occasion she seized the opportunity at a *baraza* - a community elders' meeting- to talk about the need to build constructive Christian and Muslim relations in the Coast region of Kenya and equally involved her St. Thomas Anglican Church of Kenya on this venture.



Participants in session

RWANDA

PROCMURA Area Adviser for Rwanda now Serves in Morocco

Rev. Daniel Dushimimana (left) with Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah at the PROCMURA Central Office

PROCMURA's Area Adviser in Rwanda, Rev. Daniel Dushimimana of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda has moved to Morocco in North Africa to work with the Evangelical Church in Morocco. The Evangelical Church in Morocco (Eglise Evangélique au Maroc-EEAM) which was started in 1907 by the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (Société Mission Evangélique de Paris-SMEP) is now home to Christian students and workers from sub-Saharan Africa and some diplomats from Europe.

The **Evangelical Community of Apostolic Action** (CEVAA in French) Community of Churches in Mission, born from the SMEP in 1971, in conjunction with EEAM, identified Daniel Dushimimana who PROCMURA trained at St Paul's University, Limuru in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations as the most appropriate person to serve the church in the predominantly Muslim populated country. He will serve as a Theological Trainer (Animateur Théologique) and Pastor of Rabat Parish under the auspices of the EEAM.

Rev. Dushimimana is the second PROCMURA Area Adviser to serve in North Africa. The first person was Rev. Daniel Konan, PROCMURA Area Adviser for Côte d'Ivoire, after having been sponsored by PROCMURA to study Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at the Dar Comboni Institute of Arabic Studies, in Cairo. DM-Exchange Switzerland and ACO France requested his Church, (the United Methodist Church in Cote d'Ivoire) and PROCMURA to second him to them so that he may serve as pastor of the Evangelical Community of Cairo and the Protestant Community of Alexandria. He completed his 5 years of service in 2013 and has since returned to Côte d'Ivoire.

Rev. Dushimimana and his wife Dina Nyiransengimana and their four children travelled to Morocco on 20th August 2013 and have since settled down to work.

PROCMURA look at these developments as enriching since its trained Area Advisers are able to serve the African Churches outside Africa, South of the Sahara, where it is most active.

We pray for Daniel Dushimimana and his family and indeed those that he is going to serve, that his ministry shall be fruitful.

SWITZERLAND

PROCMURA Contributes to the Proceedings of the WCC International Conference on the Politicisation of Religion and Rights of Minorities

Geneva,

As part of the preparation towards its General Assembly in Busan, South Korea, the WCC organised an international conference on the "politicisation of Religion and Rights of Minorities." The conference took place at the WCC headquarters in Geneva, from 16th to 19th September 2013. The General Adviser of PROCMURA was asked to come with scholars and practitioners in Christian-Muslim relations who are conversant with the subject of the conference to participate and make an African contribution to the discussions.

The PROCMURA delegation was made up of Ambassador Bethwel Kiplagat a PROCMURA Trustee and Veteran in peace negotiations and advocate for the respect of Human Rights for all; Dr. Issa Ziydyi, Lecturer, National University, Zanzibar, Rev. Mbilinyi Lusungu of the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre, Rev. James Bol Obwonyo, PROCMURA Acting Area Adviser for South Sudan, Rev. Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel a doctoral research student on the 'Concept of a Just Peace in the Context of the Religio-Political Upheavals in Some Parts of Nigeria'.

Ambassador Bethwel Kiplagat chaired the African presentations which in our view were well received and appreciated.



From left to right Dr. Issa Ziydyi, Rev. James Bol Obwonyo, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, Rev. Mbilinyi Lusungu, Rev. Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel



TRANSITION:

We humbly accept the promotion to Glory of Rev. Ted Atusaye Goliath Mwambila who was Executive Committee member of PROCMURA. The late Rev. Mwambila of the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) passed on to be with the Lord on 29th of April 2013. The late Rev. Ted Mwambila served PROCMURA with great dedication from 2007 until his demise. PROCMURA will always cherish the memory of his service and work that will remain with us for a long period of time. May his soul rest in peace, Amen.

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



Painting and installations in progress

This is an eye-catching, modern business centre in a sought after area with a wide range of facilities offered to tenants. There is a mix of open plan and single office units available depending on your requirements, ensuring there is something for everyone. Meeting rooms are provided on site, along with common areas, kitchen facilities and more. There is the option to take virtual office space at this address.



Conference room at roof top

UPCOMING EVENTS:

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- **West Africa Christian Islamicists, Area Advisers and Women Consultation on Christian-Muslim Relations** (11-13 December 2013)
- **PROCMURA Executive Committee Meeting in December Accra, Ghana** (9-10 December 2013)

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