



PROGRAMME FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN AFRICA
PROGRAMME DES RELATIONS ISLAMO-CHRETIENNES EN AFRIQUE



ECUMENICAL PARTNERS' SEMINAR REPORT 2016

SEMINAR ON COUNTERING RADICALISATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM



PROCMURA Meeting and Conference Centre ■ Nairobi, Kenya ■ 3rd June 2016



INTRODUCTION

Radicalisation and violent extremism is a global phenomenon that has attracted global, continental, regional, national and local attention. Inhuman incidences related to radicalisation and violent extremism is constantly reported in the media worldwide, sometimes with vivid pictures of the worst that violent extremism has done. The irony of the situation that affects the life and work of PROCMURA is when such violent extremists attribute their action to their faith conviction, and sometimes use scripture and God to justify their atrocious actions.



Kenya, the country which houses the PROCMURA Central Office has in the past few years faced and continue to face increasing challenges of radicalisation and violent extremism. Many human lives have been lost and several people wounded and maimed, as a result of the activities of the well known Al-Shabaab whose origins and home base is neighbouring Somalia.



It is in the light of this worrying situation that PROCMURA deemed it appropriate and important, to bring together Ecumenical and Church related organisations whose work cover different countries in Africa, so that we may reason together on the philosophy and ideology of the radicalised and violent extremists and map out what needs to be done to counter it.

Welcome

In her welcome address, the PROCMURA Team Leader – Finance and Administration, Joy Wandabwa, underlined PROCMURA's commitment to work with all ecumenical and church related organisations in the area of Christian-Muslim relations since that is the vocation of PROCMURA. She expressed her joy on the good working relations that PROCMURA enjoys with all the organisations present. She welcomed participants to visit and interact with PROCMURA in formal and none formal ways so that together we can enrich one another as we seek to serve God and fellow human beings in our different areas of work.



Participation

The ecumenical organisations that were invited for the seminar were: The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), Church Missionary Society (CMS-Africa), Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), Transforming, Analysing, Accompanying, and Building Change Organisation (TAABCO), African Alliance of Young Men Christian Associations (AAYMCAs), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), World Students Christian Fellowship (WSCF), Christian Organisations Research and Advisory Trust for Africa (CORAT Africa), Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN), United Religions Initiative (URI Africa), and St Paul's University.



Although not all organisations invited were able to make it due to earlier engagements, twenty-two (22) participants were present

Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, the General Adviser, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah adhered to the custom of PROCMURA by taking participants through what PROCMURA in essence is and what its vocation is. Shortly after that he, as the lead resource person journeyed with the participants in unbundling the phenomena of radicalisation and violent extremism. He provided succinct explanation on what both mean and their interconnection. He outlined the major actors and networks evidently linked to radicalisation and violent extremism both at the global and continental levels. It was made vividly clear that religious teachings and injunctions of Islam have been misused and misapplied by religious extremists and brigands for multiple reasons bordering on politics, economics, the quest for power that empowered politico-religious indoctrination and brainwashing. Dr. Mbillah offered explanation on the use and misuse of the word Jihad to perpetuate violence. He reminded participants that religion (including Christianity) have over the ages been misused to perpetuate violence. Adding that, it is important for religious people to cooperate and deal with the vice, so as to restore the innate value of religion, which is, in our particular context, the love of God and the love and care for the welfare of fellow human beings.



After the opening remarks, Dr. Mbillah provided a comprehensive list of radicalised and violent extremists groups around the world and Africa in particular, whose activities have heavily implicated religion. He argued that though the activities of the violent extremists seems to suggest that they are doing so in the name of God, he asserts that God for example needs no human person to defend God-self in violent situation – the LORD has no need for a resistance army for example. In his view they may be doing so in the name of their religions, thereby making their religions appear to be evil and not God. To that extent, we will need to work together with our Muslim neighbours to redeem religion from the violent extremists.

Elaboration on Specific radicalised and Violent Extremists Groups

Presentations on candid examples of the actions of notable violent extremists groups were made. The first presentation was on the horrendous acts of Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad globally known as "Boko Haram". Graphic presentation of the group was made by the Programme Officer of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Lesmore G. Ezekiel. The second presentation was in sequential manner the various terror attacks of Al-Shabaab operating in East Africa but specifically their horrors in Kenya. The presentation was made by the Programme and Research Assistant who is also in charge of Women Issues in Christian-Muslim relations Ms. Florence Iminza.



The third presentation was on Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) / Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The graphical illustrative presentation was made by Dr. Mbillah. Thereafter participants engaged in questions and answers session. Clarifications were sought on some issues and appropriate responses were given.

Other presentations that followed were on the use/misuse of Scripture as the foundational base for extremism and radicalisation, the plight of the affected, and guidelines for Christian and Muslim relations in the face of radicalisation and violent extremism. At the end of each presentation, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the issues among themselves. Questions were asked and the presenters provided more information on the subjects under discussion.



Feedback

The PROCMURA designed on-the-spot activity assessment form was used to elicit quick feedback from the participants. Each participant was given a copy of the form to fill out



Participants' Assessment

All the participants commended the timeliness of the seminar. They appreciated the inputs in terms of the quality of presentations and plenary discussions. The areas covered during the seminar exposed most of the participants to issues that they were less informed about.

The participants expressed concerns on the limited time for the seminar. They made suggestions for the seminar to go for more than one day and if possible residential.

There was a suggestion that a more institutionalised training be put in place on curbing radicalisation and violent extremism for Christian and Muslim religious and lay leaders, women and youth included. In other words, short-term courses should be introduced by PROCMURA mainly to strengthen capacities of Christians and Muslims towards being proactive in building and safe-guarding peace in society and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims.

Conclusion

PROCMURA expresses profound appreciation to her ecumenical partners that participated in the seminar. Their participation made the programme a success. Gratitude is due to our partners that have not relented in supporting our programmes and other activities. As a team in PROCMURA, we are optimistic that the seminar was helpful to the participants and their respective organisations. We commit ourselves to organising similar programme as our contribution to holistic human wellbeing and the wellbeing of the environment we live in.

Participants' Commitment

Participants made the following commitments:

- i. To share information and lessons learnt within their organisations;
- ii. To organise sensitisation programmes for their constituencies and invite PROCMURA to facilitate;
- iii. To be agents of peace in the society and peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims through building mutual relations across religious and cultural boundaries.

Photo Gallery



OUR VISION

A continent where Christian and Muslim communities in spite of their differences, work together for justice, peace and reconciliation, towards the holistic development of the human family and the environment.

OUR MISSION

Faithful 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 coexistence.

OUR OVERAL GOAL

To see an African continent where Christians and Muslims uphold the principles of religious freedom and all that it entails and constructively relates to promote peace in the society and peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities, and jointly responding to environmental challenges.