



COMMUNIQUE



TRAINING OF TRAINERS WORKSHOP FOR THE FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA REGION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF (FoRB)

We, Christian and Muslim religious leaders from (5) West African countries of **Benin, Burkina-Faso, Guinea Conakry, Senegal and Togo**, gathered in Lomé under the aegis of PROCMURA, for the Training of Trainers Workshop on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) held at Hotel LA BASE 228 in Agoe Nyive, (Lomé, Togo) from 8 to 11 May 2022;

Having carefully been taken through the principles guiding FoRB within the framework of PROCMURA's vision of an African continent where freedom of religion and all that it entail becomes the norm and not an exception for the promotion of peace and development;

Having considered, exchanged views, and deliberated on:

- Skills needed to promote the FoRB;
- FoRB from the Islamic perspective;
- FoRB from the Christian perspective;
- Legal perspective of FoRB (human rights perspective);
- Women input on FoRB and what that means to them;
- The need to accept the differences that exist between our two religions;
- The need to reduce inter-religious tensions for peace in our different countries;
- The need to build constructive, firm and sincere relations between Christians and Muslims as a substantive mechanism for the promotion of FoRB.
- Tolerance and respect for religious differences;
- The need for Christian and Muslim communities to take clear positions on all forms of religious extremism;
- The rooting of the Culture of Peace;
- The search for a path to sustainable peace;

Having listened to each country's experience of FoRB related challenges and entered into discussions and in-depth analyses; enriched by concrete examples in our respective countries on how we, as religious leaders, can address the issues that have been discussed in the said training to promote freedom of religion or belief and all that it entails;

Aware that freedom of religion or belief is sometimes confusing and leads to huge misunderstandings in religious communities as to its interpretation;

Deeply concerned by the persistence of acts of violence that continue to be perpetrated by some religious groups, violating the principles of the FoRB and all that it entails;

Acknowledging that despite positive developments in Christian-Muslim relations in some countries, much more needs to be done in relation to FoRB;

Having understood and accepted that as religious leaders we have the responsibility to provide training and strive to offer FoRB and all that it entails to members of our religions regardless of their geographical location;

We do hereby pledge and affirm our commitment and determination to stand together and work constantly to promote FoRB as Procmura understands it for sustainable peace in West Africa in particular, and in Africa in general;

In the light of these we, as religious leaders, from the two largest religions in West Africa and representing millions of followers commit ourselves:

- **To live in peace and social cohesion** and to show the way to our faithful while working for the prevention of conflicts and the promotion of peace in the respect of freedom of religion or belief;

- **To respect and appreciate** each other's religious values, beliefs, practices and differences;
- **To initiate educational** programmes for the members of our communities;
- **To be pragmatic** in the design and delivery of messages to counteract and demystify malicious language that propagates and encourages extremist ideologies;
- **To spare no effort** in conducting awareness-raising campaigns within religious communities to promote freedom of religion and belief and all that it entails
- **To remain vigilant** and impartial in refraining from any act that constitutes a threat and a violation of the FoRB.
- **To make the promotion** of freedom of religion or belief and all that it entails, a priority for peace and peaceful coexistence of the populations of the sub-region;
- **To practice and encourage** freedom of religion or belief that is in consonance with the principles of good governance, political stability, economic growth and sustainable development for the betterment of the people,
- **To draw the attention** of leaders and members of the two religions in the sub-region to the importance of constructive Christian-Muslim relations as a substantive mechanism for the promotion of freedom of religion or beliefs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to the government and people of Togo for the warm welcome they gave us on our arrival and during our stay in Lomé;

Our thanks to the Area Committee of PROCMURA, in TOGO for agreeing to host this Training of Trainers workshop on FoRB and to the entire Religious Community of TOGO;

Our thanks also go to the PROCMURA Consultant and to all the speakers who enriched our knowledge on freedom of religion or belief;

Finally, we say a big thank you to the General Adviser of PROCMURA and to all his Staff who came from Nairobi, Kenya, and to the partner **Center for Church-Based Development (CKU)** who sponsored the workshop.

Done in Lomé, Togo, on 10 May 2022.

Signed by :

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