

**2023 SECOND QUARTER MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-  
RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT NICON LUXURY  
HOTEL, ABUJA, FROM MAY 17 TO 19, 2023**

**COMMUNIQUÉ**

**PREAMBLE**

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), under the leadership of the Co-chairmen, His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, and the President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), His Eminence, Archbishop (Dr) Daniel Okoh, held its 2023 Second Quarter Meeting at NICON Luxury Hotel, Abuja, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2023. The theme of the meeting was "Media and Effective Leadership for Nation-building".

The Opening Ceremony, which was held at the venue of the meeting, was attended by traditional rulers, religious leaders, senior government functionaries, Non-Governmental Organizations, media practitioners and the youth. Dignitaries at the opening session included the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Gida Mustapha; the Permanent Secretary, General Services, OSGF, Dr. Maurice Nnamdi Mbaeri; and the representatives of the invited media executives. Also at the meeting were the representatives of the Search for Common Grounds, Dr Andy Nkemneme, and the International Director of Media Campaign Against Human Trafficking (MeCAHT), Ms Anne Abok.

The meeting was declared open by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation who expressed his pleasure to have worked with the leadership of NIREC since his assumption of office in November 2017. The Co-chairmen and Executive Secretary of NIREC, Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Omonokhua, delivered

engaging opening remarks on the need for media practitioners to see themselves as nation builders. Two papers were also presented on the theme of the meeting by two media Amazons, Mrs Eugenia Abu of Eugenia Abu Media Centre and Hajia Zainab Okino, Chairperson of the Editorial Board of Blueprint newspapers. Goodwill messages were equally delivered by media organisations in Nigeria, represented by the African Independent Television (AIT) and Arise News Television.

## RESOLUTIONS

After extensive deliberations and reflections on the theme of the meeting, the Council unanimously:

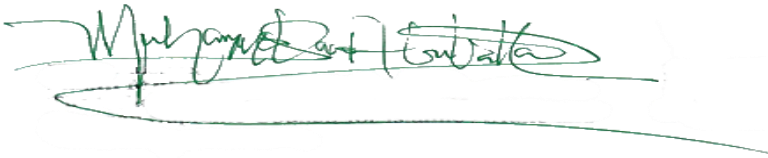
1. **condemned** the accidental Pastors and Imams who turned the houses of worship into campaign rallies and released fake prophecies that tended to portray the 2023 elections as a contest between Christianity and Islam;
2. **noted** with dismay the resurgence of insecurity in Nigeria, with cases of attacks and banditry recorded in various parts of the country after there had been a lull during electioneering;
3. **dissociated** religion from the activities of criminals that continue to perpetrate evil for ethnic, political and economic reasons;
4. **decried** the activities of journalists, bloggers and social media influencers who heat up the polity with fake, disturbing and alarming news;
5. **enjoined** media practitioners to see their job as a calling to the good and development of Nigeria and not just any other profession that guarantees access to riches and fame;
6. **affirmed** that recent events have tested the faith of Nigerians but Nigerians have proved and determined to live as one united and indivisible country under God;
7. **expressed** worry about the ongoing war in Sudan and emphasized the crucial roles of the media in either ending or prolonging the conflict;
8. **stressed** that God has entrusted the deliverance of Nigeria to all Nigerians who believe in Him and failure to entrench peace, security and development in the polity is tantamount to failing God;
9. **urged** the media to understand social responsibility and practice development journalism while refraining from reporting negative stories all the time about Nigeria as if nothing good or positive is happening in the country;
10. **tasked** media practitioners to understand Nigeria and engage with Nigerians across ethnic and religious boundaries in order to appreciate that

misconceptions reinforced by the media are not true based on personal experiences;

11. **charged** the youth to discover opportunities in Nigeria because the opportunities they are looking for outside Nigeria are what the Indians, the Chinese and the Lebanese trooping into the country are coming to harness;
12. **advised** Nigerians, especially religious leaders, against the practice of flaunting wealth and influence in public because of its negative motivation and pressure that such ostentation has in making youth desperate to be rich at all costs;
13. **encouraged** religious leaders to embrace the social media to orientate, guide and direct the youth who have captured and dominated the space to promote hatred and intolerance;
14. **decided** to foster a more cordial relationship with the media with a view to advancing common goals and interests geared towards nation-building;
15. **enjoined** the media to continue to beam light on corruption, injustice and abuse of power in order to build a more just and equitable society;
16. **called** on the media to shed the toga of bias in its reporting by holding as sacrosanct the principles of truth, fairness, balance and objectivity;
17. **advocated** that the Nigeria media should be proud of their country, be professional in their work and explore new technologies and platforms to reach a wider audience in promoting transparency and accountability;
18. **acknowledged** the roles of the media in leading anti-colonial struggle, fostering civilian rule and advancing democratic governance;
19. **appealed** to Nigerians not to take the law into their own hands and that they should support the next leadership of Nigeria while pursuing the constitutional means of addressing their grievances;
20. **honoured** the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, for his service to the nation and hoped that his successor would emulate his commitment to promoting interfaith cooperation and dialogue; and
21. **commended** the NIREC Youth Forum for its activities since its inauguration especially through dousing tension and working with their colleagues towards preventing violence after the 2023 elections.
22. **Appreciated** the military and security agencies for the good job they are doing in securing the country despite the challenges and **encourages** them to double their efforts in that regard.

## APPRECIATION

NIREC sincerely thanked the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, for its contributions to the success of its meetings since the inception of the Administration. The Council also appreciated the Secretary to the Government of the Federation for his personal commitment and unflinching support to the success of NIREC programmes and activities demonstrated through his regular attendance of NIREC meetings, despite his tight schedules. The Council was additionally grateful to the Guest Speakers, Mrs Eugenia Abu and Hajiya Zainab Okino for their thought-provoking presentations at the meeting. The Council lauded all partners, guests and stakeholders who contributed in diverse ways to the success of the meeting.



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**His Eminence Alhaji Muhammed Sa'ad Abubakar CFR, mni**  
The Sultan of Sokoto and President-General,  
Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)  
**CO-CHAIRMAN**



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**His Eminence Archbishop Dr. Daniel Okoh**  
President, Christian Association of  
Nigeria (CAN)  
**CO-CHAIRMAN**



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**Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua**  
Executive Secretary