



NIREC

Office of The National Co-ordinator/
Executive Secretary

Nigeria Inter-Religious Council

Federal Secretariat Complex Phase 1, Shehu Shagary Way, Abuja, (Ground Floor, Besides Dana Air Office).

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25th January, 2011.

THE COMMUNIQUE

THE 2011 FIRST QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT THE PREMIER HOTEL IBADAN, OYO STATE FROM 24TH TO 26TH JANUARY, 2011

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) under the Co-Chairmanship of the Sultan of Sokoto, who is also the President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar CFR, mni; and the President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and President, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor OFR, held its 2011 First Quarterly General Meeting at Premier Hotel, Ibadan, from 24th - 26th January, 2011. The meeting was attended by the principal officers and members of NIREC.

The formal Opening Ceremony was held at Mapo Hall, Ibadan, and was attended by their Excellencies, the Governor of Oyo State, Otunba Christopher Adebayo Alao Akala; the Deputy Governor, Oyo State, Alhaji Taofik Oladejo Arapaja; the Governors of Ondo and Osun States, ably represented by the Deputy Governor, Alhaji Ali Olanusi and His Royal Majesty, the Akirun of Ikirun respectively. Also in attendance were the Secretary to the State Government, Chief Olayiwola Olakojo; Chief of Staff to the Oyo State Governor, Dr. Saka Adegbite Balogun; Head of Service, Alhaja Kudirat Adeleke; members of the Oyo State Executive Council; Special Advisers to the Governor and Permanent Secretaries.

Other dignitaries present at the Opening included Aare Musulumi of Yorubaland, Alhaji Abdulazeez Arisekola Alao; Traditional Rulers from the South West States amongst whom were the representative of the Olubadan of Ibadan, High Chief Edward Oyewole; Alake of Egbaland, Oba Adedotun Gbadebo; Olowo of Owo; Deji of Akure; Timi of Ede; and other seventy (70) Traditional Rulers from Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Ogun States; State Chairmen of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) from the South West; Christian and Muslim Women Associations from the South West, Leagues of Imams and Alfas and Opinion Leaders.

Two papers were presented on "The Role of Religious Leaders in Politics and Governance" by Prof. Christiana E. E. Okojie (delivered by Dr. Eghafona) of the University of Benin and Prof. I. B. Bello- Imam of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

The Council:

- Expressed its immense delight and gratitude to His Excellency, the Governor, the Government and people of Oyo State for the hospitality extended to members and
- Thanked the Governors of Ondo and Osun States for sending their representatives and their goodwill messages.

The Council also observed that:

- Religious and traditional leaders have critical and major roles to play in promoting political harmony and stability;
- The persistent loss of life and property occasioned by communal strife, political and religious intolerance in several parts of this country has assumed a worrisome dimension;
- The sanctity of human life must be preserved at all times;
- Peace and security are necessary ingredients for the sustenance of democratic principles of the country;
- Religious and traditional leaders must learn from the mistakes of the past and renew their commitment to God and the nation;
- A democratic society which enshrines equity and justice cannot be established through violence and impunity;
- Religion, when properly understood, plays a vital and positive role in politics and good governance;
- NIREC remains an important forum in addressing issues that affect the corporate existence of Nigeria as an indivisible nation; and
- Effective participation of voters in the electoral process is a necessary ingredient for the survival of democracy and good governance.

RESOLUTIONS

The Council:

On the Role of Traditional and Religious Leaders

- i. Appeals to traditional and religious leaders at all levels to imbibe the spirit of courage to speak the truth at all times and seek genuine solutions and reconciliation of aggrieved parties;
- ii. Urges religious leaders to continue to preach peace to their followers in order to enhance religious harmony;
- iii. Calls on Royal Fathers and religious leaders across the country not to relent in their efforts to constantly discourage suspicion, which usually underlines crises in the country, among our people.
- iv. Leaders should intensify interfaith dialogue and preach religious tolerance.

On violence in the country

- v. Condemns in the strongest terms the spate of violence in the country especially in Plateau and Borno states;
- vi. Sympathises with the families of all who lost their lives and property in the mayhem and prays that God console them;
- vii. Recommends that victims of such mayhem be adequately compensated by the Federal and State Governments;
- viii. Calls on the Federal, State and Local Governments to detect, expose and prosecute those responsible for these dastardly acts of violence;
- ix. Advises the leaders of both religions to exercise restraint in their utterances and publications in order not to aggravate the situation;
- x. Appeals for an immediate end to the wanton destruction of life and property;
- xi. Pleads with Governments at all levels to map out strategies to combat youth restiveness and create employment for the citizens;
- xii. Urges State Governments to expand the State Security Councils to include religious leaders for more effective performance;
- xiii. Reiterates the need for the Federal Government to implement the recommendations of various panels set up on the recurring Jos and other ethno-religious crises.

Voter Registration and the April, 2011 Elections

- xiv. Calls on all eligible Nigerians to participate in the ongoing voter registration exercise to fulfill their civic responsibilities;
- xv. Advises the citizens to vote for credible and God-fearing leaders who will serve honestly and selflessly;
- xvi. Calls on the Government to extend the on-going voter registration exercise in view of the complaints that have trailed the exercise so that voters are not disenfranchised;
- xvii. Calls on all to resist the pressure to be used to perpetrate electoral malpractices.

Other Issues

- xviii. Appeals to State and Local Governments to allocate land for Christian and Muslim Places of Worship without hindrance;
- xix. Commits itself to the constitution of a Committee that will move round the States of the Federation to establish State Chapters of NIREC in order to effectively reach the grassroots;
- xx. Appeals to the religious leaders to promote peace, uphold and protect fundamental human rights;
- xxi. Calls for the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation and all other harmful practices against women;
- xxii. Urges all Nigerians to continuously pray for peace especially about the forthcoming elections;
- xxiii. Appeals that the situation in Cote d'Ivoire be peacefully addressed and that the winner of the elections be enthroned to entrench democracy in the sub-region and avert the looming civil war in the country; and