

**2022 THIRD QUARTER MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-
RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT THE LAGOS
CONTINENTAL HOTEL, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, FROM
SEPTEMBER 25 TO 27, 2022**

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 the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), His Eminence, Archbishop (Dr) Daniel Okoh, held its 2022 Third Quarter Meeting at the Lagos Continental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, from the 25th to 27th of September, 2022. The theme of the meeting was “Working Together for Justice and Peace”.

The Opening Ceremony, which was held at the venue of the meeting, was attended by traditional rulers, religious leaders and political stalwarts from Lagos state. Also present at the ceremony were the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), who was represented by the Permanent Secretary, General Services, Dr. Maurice Nnamdi Mbaeri; the President/CEO of WildAid, Peter Knight, represented by WildAid Nigeria Representative, Mark Ofua; and the Secretary General of the African Council of Religious (ACRL), Dr Francis Kuria, among other stakeholders. The new President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Co-Chairman of NIREC was presented by His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, at the ceremony and the 60 members of the NIREC Youth Forum were inaugurated at the meeting.

The meeting was declared open by the Governor of Lagos state, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who expressed his pleasure to attend the meeting just as he arrived from the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, the purpose of which was for strengthening world peace. The Co-chairmen and Executive Secretary of NIREC, Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Omonokhua, delivered stimulating opening remarks that bordered on the imperative of working harmoniously together for justice and peace in Nigeria. Two papers were also presented on the theme of the meeting by Dr Sakinah Arimiyau of Lagos State University (LASU) and Elder Amb Justina Mike Ngwobia, the Executive Director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement, Jos.

RESOLUTIONS

After extensive deliberations and intensive reflections on the theme of the meeting and State of the Nation, NIREC unequivocally:

1. **urged** Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic, religious and political affiliations, to work together to foster peace, entrench justice and remain guided by the national motto of Nigeria, “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress”;

2. **condemned** hate speech in its entirety and admonished Nigerian religious and political leaders to avoid it in their engagements with their followers because of its negative implications for peace, unity and stability;
3. **charged** Nigerian leaders at all levels to ensure good governance as a major pillar of positive peace and harmonious co-existence;
4. **called** on the Federal Government to consider the strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) as a national emergency and pay their outstanding salaries as a way of alleviating the severe hardship of non-payment of salaries on their families;
5. **implored** ASUU to be law-abiding and reciprocate the gesture of Government by calling off its strike which has subjected millions of Nigerian students and their parents to agony;
6. **appealed** to all Nigerians to embrace peace, share love, desist from hating one another, live together in brotherhood, be accountable, abhor ethnic sentiments and elect only leaders who have the capacity to deliver democratic dividends in the 2023 general elections;
7. **advocated** mental reengineering, restoration of religious values and national change of attitudes among Nigerians as ways of addressing the roots of the various challenges that confront the country;
8. **tasked** Nigerians to always build bridges of peace, extend hands of fellowship to others and promote our common humanity since we were all born as human beings first before realising our ethnic and ethnic identities;
9. **denounced** religious sects and sociocultural groups that hold extremist views and tasked leaders to mount pressure on them so that they may not constitute a threat to the wellbeing of the generality of the society;
10. **enjoined** Nigerian religious and political leaders to invest more in building the culture of peace and entrenching the eight pillars of positive peace, which are well-functioning government, sound business environment, acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbours, free flow of information, high levels of human capital, low levels of corruption and equitable distribution of resources;
11. **stressed** the need for Nigerians to be faithful, positive, hopeful and good in all circumstances because sinfulness against God makes everything around rebel against us;
12. **recommended** that the National Universities Commission (NUC) introduce a compulsory course on Inter-religious Dialogue to be taught under the General Studies Divisions of Nigerian universities while NIREC will support the NUC to develop the curriculum and provide training to the academic staff involved in its delivery;

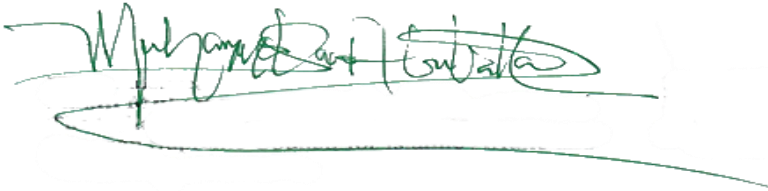
13. **encouraged** Nigerians to imbibe the spirit of inter-religious dialogue which operates at three levels: the practical (collaborating to help humanity), the spiritual (attempting to experience the dialogue partner's religion or ideology from within) and the cognitive (seeking to understand the truth of others);
14. **reiterated** the imperative of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding among Nigerians across religious, ethnic and political boundaries in line with the assertion, "Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand" in the old Nigerian national anthem;
15. **noted** that as no one can be safe alone and we can only be safe together, all Nigerians should take active parts in supporting peace and they should stop stoking the embers of hatred and conflict;
16. **advised** all Nigerians to consciously work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination, protection of human rights, entrenchment of equitable, humane and sustainable development as well as integration of contemporary and traditional humanistic values;
17. **commended** as role models the Imam who rescued Christians whose lives were in danger at a great risk to his own life and the Catholic Bishop who rejected the monetary gift of a Governor by asking him to add such money to pay the salaries of teachers and civil servants;
18. **identified** the interdependence of peace and justice because where one is missing, the other is lacking while emphasising that both justice and peace allow for standard of societal behaviour, dignity of humankind, harmonious societal relations and fundamental human rights of all;
19. **admonished** Nigerians to stand on the truth, break the shackles of identity politics, shun religious bigotry and unite as one people under God to build a strong nation on the solid ground of justice and peace; and
20. **congratulated** the new CAN President and Co-Chairman of NIREC on his assumption of office and wished him a successful tenure of promoting healthy religious development and interfaith harmony.

APPRECIATION

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) profoundly appreciated the support of the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, towards the successful conduct of the meeting. The Council also expressed its sincere gratitude to the Government and good people of Lagos State for their hospitality. NIREC especially acknowledged the commitment of the Governor of Lagos State, Mr Babajide Sanwo-olu, to the success of the

meeting which made him to personally attend the opening session while just returning from a foreign trip with Mr President.

The Council also thanked the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Boss Gida Mustapha, for his unflinching support to the success of NIREC programmes. The Council is no less grateful to the Guest Speakers, Dr Sakinah Arimiyau and Elder Amb Justina Mike Ngwobia for their thought-provoking presentations that deepened the understanding of the theme of the meeting from Islamic and Christian perspectives. The Council is equally grateful to all the dignitaries and stakeholders who contributed in diverse ways towards the successful hosting of the third quarter 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 Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Okoh
President, Christian Association of
Nigeria (CAN)
CO-CHAIRMAN



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Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua
Executive Secretary