

## THE COMMUNIQUE

### 2009 (3RD QUARTER) MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT THE CONFERENCE HALL PRESIDENTIAL HOTEL PORT-HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.

16<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009.

#### Communique

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, Albaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar CFR, mni; and the President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), His Grace Archbishop, Dr., John Onaiyekan, (CON) held its 3rd Quarter General meeting at the Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, Rivers State from 16-18 August, 2009. The meeting was attended by the principal officers and members of NIREC from across the states of the Federation.

The formal Opening Ceremony of the meeting, which was preceded by an interactive session with a cross-section of religious and traditional leaders in South-South geo-political zone, was attended and declared open by the Executive Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi who was ably represented by his Deputy, Engineer Tele Ikuru.

Other dignitaries included the Representative of the Delta State Governor, Reverend G. E. Agbudata (Special Adviser on Religious Matters), members of the State Executive Council, Traditional/Religious Leaders and Elder Statesmen from the South - South Zone of Nigeria.

Whereas NIREC has preached inter-religious understanding and peaceful co-existence among adherents of different faiths and made dialogue the bed rock of religious harmony and sustainable development in the country, the Council (NIREC):

The Council observed that:

- Peace and security are gradually returning to Rivers State.
- The granting of amnesty to Niger Delta militants provides some new openings for peace in the Niger Delta.
- The Boko Haram sectarian violence in some parts of northern Nigeria is strongly condemned by all and sundry.
- The unfortunate sensational reporting of the incident by a section of the media be condemned.
- The rate of kidnapping in the country is worrisome.
- Unemployment and ignorance are major contributors to the problem of religious intolerance in the Country.
- Corruption in the Country is of great concern and efforts must be intensified to reduce and if possible, eliminate it from our polity.

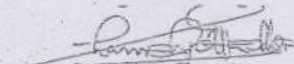
#### RESOLUTIONS

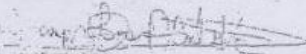
The Council resolved to:

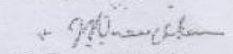
- Continue to remain an informed, indivisible, apolitical and proactive body of religious leaders.
- Be totally committed to the cause of promoting peace, justice, equity and fair play without fear or favour.
- Use religion as a mechanism for societal harmony, growth, and development for a stronger and united Nigeria.
- Call on the government to consider all those who kill or maim in the name of religion as criminals and treat them as such.
- Call on the government to take the development of the Niger Delta areas more seriously and be committed to the promotion of sustainable peace.
- Call on the government to give bener attention to the creation of employment opportunities most especially for the youth who often serve as the cannon fodder of most of the crises in the country.

infrastructure and basic amenities to raise the standard of living of Nigerians.

- Call on parents to become more alive to their responsibility for the proper training of their wards and ensure that their children are not recruited into criminal gangs.
- Call on law enforcement agencies to be alert and pro-active in dealing with religious conflicts in the Country
- Commend the training workshop organized for youth leaders by NIREC in Minna in February 2009 and call for more of such training programmes.
- Call on the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to effect the directive of the President of Nigeria that Christian/Islamic Studies be made compulsory in the curricula of secondary education in Nigeria in conformity with the constitutional provision of Nigeria as "a sovereign nation under God".
- Call on religious leaders to be mindful of what they say not only in their sermons but also in public and private places as this could be taken as a commandment by their followers.
- Appeal to rumour peddlers in the Nigerian society and those who manipulate religion for selfish political goals to mind their actions.
- Caution the media to be mindful of how it reports religious conflicts.
- Call on religious leaders to be alert to curb preachers who might want to hide under the guise of any of the two major religions in Nigeria to fan embers of violence.
- Urge all the states of the Federation to provide support for the formation of state and local government chapters of NIREC.
- Appeal to international development organizations operating in Nigeria to provide support for the attainment of the goals and objectives of NIREC.
- Call on the Federal Government and ASUU to adopt dialogue as a means of resolving disagreements. The leadership of NIREC is ready to mediate on the issues.
- Urge the Federal and State Governments of Nigeria to create and sustain the requisite environment for the actualization of the fundamental rights of all Nigerians to live, work and practise their religions in any part of Nigeria without the fear of any molestation or expulsion.
- Commend the Co-Chairmen of the Council for their dynamic, exemplary and purposeful leadership.
- Thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Albaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua GCFR, for his continual support for the activities and programmes of the Nigeria Inter Religious Council (NIREC).

  
Prof. Is-lac Oyede  
National Coordinator/Executive Secretary

  
His Eminence,  
Albaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar,  
CFR, mni The Sultan of Sokoto and  
President-General Supreme Council  
for Islamic Affairs  
Co-Chairman

  
His Grace, Archbishop  
Dr. John Onaiyekan, CON  
President Christian  
Association of Nigeria  
(CAN)  
Co-Chairman

Issued this 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 2009