

# 2023 FOURTH QUARTER MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT BARCELONA HOTEL, WUSE II, ABUJA, FROM 4<sup>TH</sup> – 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 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 the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel C. Okoh, held its 2023 Fourth Quarter Meeting at Barcelona Hotel, Abuja, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 2023. The theme of the meeting was *“Restoration of Hope in Nigeria”*.

The Opening Ceremony, which was held at the venue of the meeting, was attended by traditional rulers, religious leaders and senior government functionaries. Dignitaries at the Opening Ceremony included the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF); Senator Dr George Akume, the Permanent Secretary, General Services, OSGF, Dr. Maurice Nnamdi Mbaeri; and the Director, Affairs of Former Heads of State and State Protocol, Alhaji Iliyasu Agaka. Also at the Ceremony were the representatives of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), UFUK Dialogue Foundation and some Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The meeting was declared open by the SGF who noted that government needs the cooperation of religious leaders to promote unity and faith, peace and progress in Nigeria while pledging to play his role to the best of his ability to ensure the success of NIREC. The Co-chairmen and the Executive Secretary of NIREC, Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua, in their well-acclaimed opening remarks expressed optimism that Nigeria would be great and urged Nigerians not to lose hope in their country. Two papers were also presented on the theme of the meeting by two resource persons, Ustaz Abubakar Siddeeq Muhammad of Comerel Travels and Barr Paul Andrew Gwaza of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja.

### RESOLUTIONS

After extensive deliberations and deep reflections on the theme of the meeting at the plenary and closed-door sessions, the Council unanimously:

1. **tasked** the Federal Government to redouble its efforts in addressing the multifarious challenges confronting Nigeria, ranging from insecurity, criminality, corruption and kidnapping to cultism and unemployment, in order to ensure peace, security and stability;
2. **urged** Nigerians, especially Muslims and Christians, to embrace one another in love and brotherhood as they avoid unhealthy divisions along ethnic, religious and regional lines so that Nigeria will attain its full potential as the giant of Africa;

3. **expressed** the commitment of NIREC to working assiduously with the Nigerian government and supporting President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration in renewing the hope of the citizens;
4. **called** on the youth and Nigerians in general not to embark on reckless emigration but have faith in the leadership of the country by remaining patriotic, prayerful and supportive; they should not offer themselves as free slaves through the Sahara, the Mediterranean and Atlantic human trafficking routes all in the name of seeking greener pasture;
5. **tasked** all Nigerians to recognize the shared values of our major religions so that we can build bridges of understanding, work towards a common vision of hope and defend the freedom of religion and belief;
6. **charged** Nigerians to develop a culture of celebrating transparency and accountability while institutionalizing a system that will make leaders answerable to their actions and inactions during and after public service;
7. **condemned** the renewed attempts of some foreign interests and their local collaborators to force the evil of homosexuality and unacceptable sexual classifications (LGBTQ2I - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex) on Nigerians while urging the National Assembly especially and the Federal Government at large to be wary of and be circumspect in accommodating evils in the guise of human rights;
8. **decried** the mindless circulation of unverified information, fake news and blackmail among Nigerians on social media hence heating up the polity, creating animosity and pitting people against one another;
9. **sympathized** with the families and victims of the unfortunate Kaduna military drone bombing and urged the Federal Government and the military authorities to go beyond regretting the incident by taking appropriate measures towards compensating the victims and their families;
10. **advocated** that governments at national and sub-national levels give all Nigerians a sense of belonging in terms of political appointments, involvement and engagement on the basis of fairness and not to give the impression that certain groups are being favored at the expense of others;
11. **cautioned** religious leaders and the general public against casting aspersion on the judiciary based on unsubstantiated interpretations of court judgments and personal opinions of commentators while encouraging the judiciary on their part to live up to their calling and oath of office to dispense justice without fear or favour as service to God;
12. **emphasized** that governments at all levels urgently address the issue of food insecurity and harsh economic climate in the country by providing dependable palliatives to all Nigerians as people become depressed, aggressive and violent when they cannot feed themselves and their families;

13. **condemned** the proliferation of light arms and small weapons in the country and urged the security agencies to double their efforts in securing the lives and properties of Nigerians against bandits, criminals, unknown gunmen and other non-state actors who continually terrorize Nigerians;
14. **resolved** to convene a National Youth Summit with a view to fostering youth participation in nation-building and channeling the activeness and dynamism of young Nigerians in the right course to engender human capacity development;
15. **called for** the immediate rescue of the corps members kidnapped while on their way to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation camp in Sokoto state and emphasized the urgent need to revamp the national security architecture in order to make security more proactive and effective;
16. **acknowledged** the Co-chairmen of NIREC; the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel C. Okoh and 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, for their quality leadership in ensuring the realization of the aims and objectives of NIREC;
17. **appreciated** the new Secretary to the Government of the Federal (SGF), Senator Dr George Akume, for the steps taken to host the meeting and his uncommon willingness, commitment and undertaking to ensure the success of NIREC activities.

## **APPRECIATION**

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) immensely appreciated the support of the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, towards the successful conduct of the first meeting under his administration. The Council also thanked the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Dr. George Akume, for attending the meeting and expressing his total support to NIREC in carrying out its mandate. The Council equally appreciated the Guest Speakers, Ustaz Abubakar Siddeeq Muhammad and Barr Paul Andrew Gwaza for their presentations on the theme of the meeting. The Council finally appreciated its members, including the Youth Wing, for their cooperation towards successfully concluding the last quarter meeting of 2023 with the hope that they will not rest on their laurels in 2024.

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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

