

2024 FOURTH QUARTER MEETING OF THE NIGERIA INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC) HELD AT BARCELONA HOTEL, WUSE II, ABUJA, FROM 2ND – 4TH DECEMBER, 2024

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 Okoh, held its 2024 Fourth Quarter Meeting at Barcelona Hotel, Abuja, from the 2nd to 4th of December, 2024. The theme of the meeting was, "Our Natural Resources and Insecurity in Nigeria".

The Opening Ceremony, which was held at the venue of the meeting, was attended by traditional rulers, religious leaders, senior government functionaries and distinguished members of NIREC. Dignitaries at the ceremony included the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator Dr George Akume, and the Permanent Secretary, General Service office (GSO), Dr. Maurice Nnamdi Mbaeri. Also at the Ceremony were the representatives of the Inspector General of Police, Dr Kayode Egbetokun; the Honourable Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake; and the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Senator Heinekan Lokopbiri.

The meeting was declared open by the SGF who noted that natural resources do not automatically generate conflicts and that what is needed is to determine how best to exploit the resources and what to do with them while expressing optimism that the challenges facing Nigeria would be turned to opportunities. The Co-chairmen and the Executive Secretary of NIREC, Rev. Fr. Prof. Cornelius Omonokhua, in their opening remarks noted that the natural resources endowed to Nigerians by God have become sources of conflict and insecurity. They urged Nigerians to be their brother's keeper, help one another and appreciate that life is temporary. Two papers were presented by Hajia Aisha Muhammad Ismail and Dame Comfort Otera Chigbue, JP.

RESOLUTIONS

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

1. **observed** that our natural resources have become sources of strife and insecurity but this would not have been the case if government had been fair, just and transparent in the management of those resources;

2. **called on** government and all Nigerians to use their positions to address impunity, lack of accountability, insecurity in the country and a more responsible way of using the social media;
3. **appealed** to all Nigerians to be their brother's keeper and share what they have with the needy in order to alleviate the suffering that many people are going through;
4. **stressed** that peace is the cornerstone of development and no effort should be spared in steering Nigeria to the path of sustainable peace and security;
5. **observed** that Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural and human resources but successive Nigerian leaders have not harnessed these resources to optimize their benefits for the wellbeing of the people;
6. **condemned** religious leaders who have turned their places of worship to trade centers instead of platforms for promoting faithfulness, righteousness, truth and justice;
7. **decried** the weaponization of religion, ethnicity and politics as tools of manipulating Nigerians by those who should genuinely enthrone good governance;
8. **highlighted** the contradiction in Nigeria having no gold reserves despite having a gold belt that stretches across large swathes of land while those without gold belts are controlling gold reserves;
9. **urged** governments at all levels to create a moral environment to achieve the socio-economic wellbeing of the people while religious leaders should be at the forefront of this moral renaissance as vanguards;
10. **enjoined** government to ensure that revenues derived from natural resources are managed equitably and transparently to entrench environmental protection, job creation and security;
11. **identified** environmental degradation, organized crimes, ethnic and religious tension as well as unemployment and poverty as factors that have made natural resources triggers of insecurity in Nigeria;
12. **encouraged** Nigerian leaders to demonstrate exemplary moral uprightness in the conduct of their personal and public affairs and shun the grandiose display of wealth that is prevalent in their lifestyles and celebrations;
13. **charged** Nigerian judges to be just, have the fear of God and always do what is right without fear or favour bearing in mind that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere;
14. **commended** the Federal Government and the security agencies for the improvement in the security situation in the country while urging them not to rest on their laurels in stamping out banditry, kidnapping, ritual killings, terrorism and other forms of criminality from Nigeria;
15. **tasked** government to strengthen institutional mechanisms to enhance national security with regard to the vast ungoverned territories that create fertile grounds for lawlessness and criminality in the country;
16. **called on** the Federal Government to put in more efforts in diversifying the economy and increasing investment in innovation and human capital development for the benefit of the youth and the entire citizens;
17. **affirmed** the commitment of NIREC to partnering government to achieve curriculum review and functional education;
18. **commended** the Federal Government for enthroning local government autonomy and called for the full implementation of the autonomy to transform governance and engender development at the grassroots;

19. **appreciated** the Co-chairmen of NIREC for their astute leadership that has assisted the Council in achieving its set goals and objectives.

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 success of the meeting. The Council also acknowledged the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Dr. George Akume, for his support and attending the opening session of the meeting. The Council equally thanked the Guest Speakers, the Inspector General of Police, the Honourable Minister of Solid Minerals Development and the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources for their presence, in representative capacity, and goodwill messages. The Council also expressed its unalloyed gratitude to its members, including the Youth Wing of NIREC, for their cooperation towards making the 2024 NIREC Meetings memorable.

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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