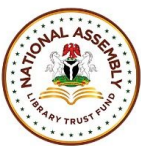




LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE ON

INTERFAITH

DIALOGUE



July 28th-29th, 2025
Abuja Continental Hotel

ABUJA COMMUNIQUE ON INTER-FAITH HARMONY

A communique issued at the end of a two-day Legislative Roundtable on Inter-faith Dialogue convened by the Office of the Speaker, House of Representatives, in collaboration with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the National Assembly Library Trust Fund (NALTF) held at Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja, FCT, July 28-29, 2025

1.0 Preamble

The two-day Legislative Roundtable on Interfaith Dialogue was convened to strengthen institutional and legislative responses to religious intolerance, hate speech, identity-based violence, and social division in Nigeria. Participants deliberated on how parliamentarians, religious institutions, and civil society can collaborate to promote religious harmony, social cohesion, and national unity.

The Roundtable brought together lawmakers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, academics, women and youth leaders, security institutions, civil society organisations and international development partners. It was organised by the Office of the Speaker of the 10th House of Representatives in collaboration with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

It featured an opening session, paper presentations and panel discussions designed to promote social cohesion, safeguard freedom of religious belief and provide lawmakers with tools to combat hate speech.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Hon. Speaker of the House of Representative, Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, PhD, GCON ably represented by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, CFR, with goodwill messages presented by religious leaders and development partners.

2.0 Context

The Roundtable acknowledged that Nigeria's growing insecurity is deeply intertwined with the weaponisation of religion, ethnic mistrust and economic marginalisation. Participants observed that:

- Religious and sectarian differences are often exploited by political and religious actors, particularly during election cycles.
- These divisions, when combined with economic hardship, escalate from ideological grievances into full-blown criminality.
- The Nigerian situation reflects a dangerous evolution from social discontent to organised violence, threatening democracy and national cohesion.

Nonetheless, participants expressed optimism that these challenges are not insurmountable and that lessons from

other countries that have recovered from worse crises, including genocide, can guide Nigeria's path to peace.

3.0 Presentations

Panel discussions were centred around the following themes:

- Parliamentary Oversight of Security Agencies' Responses to Religious Violence: Balancing Rights and Enforcement
- Countering Digital Hate Speech: Regulatory Options, Platform Responsibility, and the Promise and Perils of Artificial Intelligence
- Youth and Women as Bridge Builders Across Faith Lines
- Protecting Religious Minorities and Preventing Weaponisation of Faith in Politics: International Case Studies from Italy, Indonesia, and Kenya
- Peace Education and Curricula Reform: How Civic Education Can Foster Mutual Respect from Primary School to University

4.0 Observations

Participants made the following key observations:

1. Nigeria lacks a comprehensive institutional and legal framework designed to address religious intolerance and sectarian violence.
2. Hate speech and misinformation amplified by social media and artificial intelligence tools are accentuating already existing divisions in Nigerian society.
3. The absence of faith-sensitive legislative review processes in the National Assembly has created gaps in policymaking and implementation.
4. Women and youth are underrepresented in peacebuilding and interfaith dialogues, despite being disproportionately affected by violence.
5. There is inadequate coordination between the executive and the legislature in addressing identity-based crises.
6. No government agency currently exists with a statutory mandate to promote religious harmony and monitor sectarian tensions. Furthermore, associations like the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) should be strengthened to promote religious harmony.

5.0 Recommendations

Participants made the following recommendations:

Legislation

1. Allocate funds for policing directly to police field formations and appropriate offices, rather than concentrating resources at the service headquarter to enhance local responsiveness and operational efficiency.
2. Allocate peacebuilding funds specifically for women- and youth-led interfaith and conflict resolution initiatives.
3. Establish a legal framework compelling defence and security leaders to honour National Assembly summons, with clear enforcement mechanisms.
4. Empower and adequately fund the Nigerian Police Force, particularly for counterterrorism efforts, by recruiting more mobile police officers and establishing additional mobile units across the country.
5. Develop a legislative framework for military procurement to ensure transparency, accountability, and traceability in the acquisition, delivery, and deployment of defence equipment.
6. Establish a statutory agency or commission for interfaith dialogue and social cohesion through legislation. This body would monitor early warning signs of sectarian violence, advise on interfaith issues

- in national policy, accredit public preaching, and serve as Secretariat for a National Interfaith Council.
7. Introduce legislation to regulate online religious incitement and digital threats. This legislation should mandate social media platforms to report and remove harmful content, disclose algorithmic biases, and ensure accountability for hate speech.
 8. Institutionalise interfaith engagement in the legislative process by establishing a Multi-Faith Advisory Desk under the Rules and Business Committee, and requiring public hearings on sensitive issues to consult minority groups, youth, and women.
 9. Enhance the protection of places of worship and religious leaders by creating rapid response units, improve inter-agency intelligence coordination, and publish quarterly security audits of religious institutions.
 10. Adopt a National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250 on Women, Peace, and Security, and Youth, Peace, and Security.

Oversight

1. Institutionalise an annual State of Interfaith Harmony Report, developed with civil society to foster transparency, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

2. Strengthen oversight of security and social service MDAs to ensure transparent, effective use of appropriated funds in addressing interfaith tensions.
3. Apply a balanced approach to countering extremism, using both kinetic (security) and non-kinetic (dialogue, education, de-radicalisation) strategies.
4. Enhance coordination between the legislature and executive to ensure policy coherence and effective oversight of religious harmony.
5. Implement targeted economic empowerment programmes for youth and women to reduce vulnerability to radical ideologies and promote sustainable peace.

Public Engagement

1. Promote inclusive dialogue, protect religious freedoms, and foster mutual respect among all faith communities.
2. Combat hate speech and the misuse of religion by promoting respectful public discourse, condemning inflammatory language, engaging with media to foster tolerance, and enforcing laws against incitement, while safeguarding freedom of expression in line with the Rabat Plan of Action.
3. Integrate peace education, digital literacy, interfaith tolerance, and civic responsibility into school curricula to instil values of understanding and active citizenship from an early age.

4. Support strategic campaigns and community initiatives that advance interfaith engagement, social inclusion, and peaceful coexistence, particularly among marginalised groups.
5. Safeguard civic space and partner with civil society and faith-based organisations to co-develop inclusive and sustainable solutions to national challenges.
6. Promote ethical leadership and responsible speech by encouraging political, religious, and traditional leaders, as well as media actors, to uphold religious sensitivity, with clear sanctions for incitement and hate speech.

International cooperation

1. Adopt the Rome Action Steps into Nigeria's legislative and policy frameworks as a comprehensive model for fostering interfaith engagement and preventing religious extremism.
2. Strengthen border control mechanisms to prevent the infiltration of foreign actors who may contribute to sectarian tensions and religious violence.

6.0 Conclusion

The Communiqué reaffirms the commitment of stakeholders to build a Nigeria where peace, justice, tolerance, and mutual respect transcend religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation. Participants call for urgent

legislative and institutional reforms to secure these outcomes and ensure Nigeria becomes a model for interfaith harmony in Africa and beyond.

Issued in Abuja, Nigeria, on July 29, 2025, for and on behalf of all participants.