

Appendix 56:

Sultan: I'll Partner CAN to End Religious Crisis

From Okon Bassey in Uyo, 05.15.2007 *THISDAY*

Sultan: I'll Partner CAN to End Religious Crisis

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Saad Abubakar III has expressed willingness and determination to work with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other religious groups to end incessant religious crisis in the country.

The Sultan who spoke yesterday in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State capital during a foundation laying and fund raising ceremonies for Uyo Central Mosque, noted with concern the negative effect of such crisis on the social and economic life of the nation.

Abubakar III, who also doubles as the President-General, Jama'atul Nasrul Islam, stressed the need for the full and unconditionally restoration of the ethos of religious tolerance and understanding upon which the nation is built.

He expressed satisfaction with the support of CAN and other religious organizations in the fight to eliminate religious crisis in the country noting that the active participation of CAN in the fund raising event in the state was a great testimony to the new spirit of understating prevailing in the nation.

"It is also my firm belief that we have laid the foundation stone of greater religious harmony and tolerance in Nigeria where every one feels that he is his brother's keeper and the religious welfare of one becomes the spiritual welfare of all", he declared.

He pointed out that the foundation laying ceremony and the launching of the appeal fund would not have been possible without the atmosphere of harmony, tolerance and mutual co-existence which prevails in the state.

He further said: "As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, Nigerians must learn how to understand one another and peacefully co-exist with one another and act together to promote the spiritual welfare of one another".

He said if God had wanted he would have made Islam and Christianity to be one religion or one ethnic group but since it is not so "we should view this as a blessing and a challenge to plan together, work together and to struggle collectively to establish peace and order with a view to garnering the pleasure of God Almighty".

Speaking earlier, the state Governor, Obong Victor Attah, appealed the Sultan to use his good offices to promote harmony and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in the country. "You should also use your good offices to promote tolerance, fairplay, justice and goodwill among Nigerians so that Nigerians can live like brothers.

"Our State has always been a second and very peaceful home to Muslims and indeed other Nigerians, and I want to assure you that this will continue. We will continue to work to ensure that our brothers from other parts of the country will continue to live and carry on their

businesses happily in the state" Attah declared.

He congratulated the Sultan for his selection as the 20th Sultan of Sokoto and spiritual leader of Muslims in Nigeria attributing his elevation to the prime position to his past achievements in life and contributions to his fatherland.

Attah acknowledged political role of the Sultan in the sustenance of democracy in the country and expressed the hope that the Sultan will bring his experience and pedigree toward national development.

In their remarks, the Muslim community in the state said they have been fully integrated into the state and have lived, prospered and enjoyed peace, saying the state governor had sponsored more than 200 Muslims to Hajj since he came to office.