

FRATERNITY
DAY



THE
KUKAH
CENTRE
FAITH • LEADERSHIP • PUBLIC POLICY

COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED AT THE END OF
A PANEL DISCUSSION MARKING
WORLD FRATERNITY DAY
CELEBRATION

A ONE-DAY CONVERSATION TO MARK THE WORLD FRATERNITY DAY



Preamble

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad El-Tayyeb, on the 4th of February 2019, officially signed a document titled Human Fraternity for World Peace to support peaceful coexistence among people in the world regardless of their race, color and/or religion. The significant move by these religious leaders inspired the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres to declare every 4th February as World Fraternity Day. The decision leans on the urgency to appropriate religion as a tool to promote brotherhood and sisterhood in a world that is fractured by terrorism and war.

Over the years, the world has grappled with terrorism, wars, civil unrest and other dimensions of conflict. Amidst the proliferation of the different narratives that galvanize these existential threats to human development, it is imperative to amplify the voices of reconciliation, fraternal love, growth and peace. It was on this premise that the Founder of The Kukah Centre and member of the Council for Human Integral Development, Most Rev Matthew Hassan Kukah organized a one-day conversation to mark the first celebration of World Fraternity Day.

The purpose of the conversation was to engage religious leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), politicians, journalists, security experts and other critical stakeholders in a candid discourse on how to promote common humanity and religious fraternity in Nigeria and the world at large.

. During the conversations, the panel discussants unanimously agreed that it is essential for all humans to live in peace: this is achievable when people constantly see each other through the prism of common humanity and respect for diversity. Additionally, they identified the attainment of peace and religious fraternity as an all-inclusive engagement, underpinning the role of religious leaders as significant.

Issues/Problems

Discussants at the conversation identified problems that impede humans from achieving common humanity and religious fraternity. One of the major problems pointed out was the divisive use of religion to promote intolerance, inequality and discrimination. Sadly, Nigeria was proved guilty of that problem. Consequently, the failure to identify common ground among Nigerians shuts the doors of opportunities and possibilities for economic and social growth. Similarly, it was pointed out that the ideals of faith as enshrined in the religions contrast with the realities of the modern age i.e., people do not practice the ideals of faith that preach peace and the dignity of humanity. Rather, their actions go against their faith.



Furthermore, discussants raised a critical question on the readiness of the government to adopt resolutions provided by the United Nations towards the implementation of policies and recommendations as contained in the World Fraternity Day documents. This is necessary because Nigeria may not surmount the myriad of challenges it currently faces unless it internalizes the document and implements activities that will promote common brotherhood/sisterhood among its citizens.

From the perspective of CSOs, human fraternity cannot be achieved unless there is equity and equality in the distribution of resources, administration of justice, policy formulation and the enforcement of civil law. There should not be an overbearing dependence on religion alone. Instead, people must learn to pursue societal and cultural values, morals and virtues that de-emphasize individualism and promote unity and fraternal love.

- Initiate youth-led initiatives to teach and sensitize youths on building a better society.
- Organize economic and social activities that transcend ethnicity and religious differences (e.g., football), to promote common humanity and religious fraternity.

Religious Leaders/ Institutions

- Should champion the course of building a society where common humanity and religious fraternity are valued and practiced through their sermons and engagements in society.
- Should develop and disseminate counter-narratives that advocate for peace and recognize our common humanity.
- Encourage intermarriages among different religions and ethnic groups in order to achieve integration.
- Initiate intra-religious dialogues to better understand the internal differences in matters of faith to enhance inter-religious dialogues.
- Identify failed roles of family, educational, traditional, political and religious institutions and call out these infractions.



Traditional Leaders/Institutions

- Should encourage shared values among their communities and people.
- Encourage communal dialogue to reach the grassroots level.
- Promote cultural values and morals that dignify humans and promote peace and unity.