

TANZANIA

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April 2016

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German federal minister Dr. Gerd Müller engaged in religious dialogue

H.E. Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dr. Gerd Müller took part at a round table discussion with religious leaders in Tanzania. At this meeting religious leaders shared their opinions and experiences about inter-faith dialogue in the country.

During his opening remarks Mr. Müller stated that “regardless of religious orientation, we all share common values”. Furthermore he mentioned that Europe is facing challenges due to the influx of refugees escaping conflicts in surrounding countries. To him, terror organizations such as ISIS are not part of any religion. The religious leaders appreciated very much the effort by Mr. Müller to set time aside, despite a very hectic agenda during his visit, to meet with them. They noted that such high-level meetings hardly take place. The religious leaders highlighted their involvement in the area of social services delivery in the education and health sectors. The religious leaders noted that their contribution is sadly regarded as peripheral.



Federal Minister Dr. Gerd Müller together with the religious leaders

On behalf of the other religious leaders, Bishop Malasula gave a brief on the state of religious tolerance in Tanzania. He mentioned that in the past religion was based on mutual respect; inter-marriages were accepted; families where half the members belonging to the Islam while the other half belong to Christianity did not put any stress on the family or community relationships.

The religious leaders commented positively on the good working relationship between the German government and religious institutions in Germany. On the contrary in Tanzania the government demands “a separation between religion and government”. The religious lead-

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ers consider this to be 'artificial' because at the end of the day both the government and the religion meet at the grass-roots to service the same citizen.

The religious leaders told the Minister that most of their meetings are on need-to-meet-basis. These might be crisis-driven or a way to avert a possible clash. However, it is fair to state that they meet at least twice a year. Furthermore, the Religious Leaders advised the Minister that no official statistics on religion exist because during the national censuses the government does not allow collection of data based on one's faith or belief. However, it is known that at the grass-roots level one is bound to find an Imam, a Priest, Padre or Pastor. No village can claim to have no religious leader. Through observation alone, one can arrive at a fairly good estimate.



Minister Dr. Müller is greeted by the resident representative of KAS Tanzania

The religious leaders made it very clear that they welcome the opportunity to work with the Federal Government of Germany, its agencies and institutions. They stated, that in the likely event of collaboration between the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the religious leaders in Tanzania; the same should be one-to-one. For example it should not subject them to operate through some Ministry or Government Agency or Institution.

Minister Dr. Müller expressed his happiness concerning the way the meeting was conducted. He thanked the religious leaders for their time and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for moderating. He advised the German Ambassador to Tanzania to host a meeting with the religious leaders as soon as possible.