



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# NIGERIAN MUSLIMS NETWORK

*In pursuit of Allah's pleasure*

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## MEMO TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DIALOGUE

SUBMITTED BY

THE NIGERIAN MUSLIMS NETWORK (NMN)\*

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013

\*The Nigerian Muslim Network (NMN) is an online organization of Nigerian Muslim Professionals within Nigeria and abroad.

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013**BEING A MEMO TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DIALOGUE SUBMITTED BY THE NIGERIAN MUSLIMS NETWORK (NMN)****INTRODUCTION / PREAMBLE**

Nigeria is a multi-religious multi-cultural country. As Muslims, we believe that it is by permission of Allah (God) that people follow different beliefs and ways of life. If Allah had willed, all people would have followed one path but He, in His infinite wisdom and mercy decreed multiplicity of beliefs. Consequently, no power on earth can force people to adopt one particular path. What is required is tolerance, respect for human dignity and living in peace with each other. That is the position of Islam and that is the only way any nation can develop. It is therefore essential that the National Conference should seek to address and enshrine such principles as part of the grand norm in any constitutional make-up of the new Nigeria.

Having said that, it is important to also point out that for Muslims, obedience to the laws of God and freedom of worship is paramount. As things stand, Muslims under the current constitutional arrangement are being marginalized, unfairly treated, and in many cases not allowed to freely practice the tenets of their religion. So while Muslims welcome the continued corporate existence of Nigeria, they will demand to see the issues of fair treatment and freedom of worship as some of the guarantees to come out of the national dialogue. For this reason, Muslims would prefer that a fully Sovereign National Conference should be convened rather than a National Conference, whose outcome and recommendations may lack legal teeth and thus get watered down or eventually get thrown away completely.

**1. STRUCTURE OF THE DIALOGUE/ CONFERENCE**

i. COMPOSITION: The composition should be in such a way that as much of the constituent as possible of the population gets representation. At the same time, delegates to the conference should not be unduly unwieldy as to make the dialogue a 'Tower of Babel' and impossible to govern. We therefore suggest a maximum number of 900 delegates. These will comprise 1 delegate from each of the 774 Local governments and the remainder of 126 delegates to be filled by special interest groups, professional associations, labour, civil societies, women and youths groups as well religious organizations.



ii. SELECTION/ELECTION CRITERIA: The participants from the local governments shall be elected at the community level through a process to be supervised by recognized councils (such as Community Development Councils) in each local government. Neither political parties nor government nominees should be involved at all. The role of Government should be limited to facilitating the conduct of the Dialogue and providing a conducive environment for its success. A supervising Committee (please refer to item 2 below on legal framework) shall in consultation with the national leaderships of the special interest groups select the 126 participants to join the 774 local governments delegates.

iii. SIZE: As stated above, not more than 900 delegates from across the country.

## **2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PROCEDURES AND OPTIONS FOR INTEGRATING THE OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE INTO CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS OF THE NATION**

A basic condition precedent to the conduct of a successful Dialogue or Conference is the construction of a solid Legal Framework for all the various aspects of this important event. Mere announcement and inauguration of the Committee will not be sufficient.

The Federal Executive shall initiate a bill to the National Assembly in that regard dealing with the establishment of a Supervising Committee, its composition reflecting all the geo-political zones in equitable representation without neglecting gender positioning as well as religious diversity. It may not be a bad idea if the current Advisory Committee is transformed to such a role after satisfactory conclusion of the current mandate.

Other aspects of the Dialogue to be covered by the Legal Framework are: duration, selection of participants, issues for deliberation and general enabling environment.

The Legal Framework issue will be treated by the National Assembly like the treatment of doctrine of necessity after the demise of late President Shehu Musa Yar' Adua by giving same very urgent treatment and passage leading to the assent by the President.

The Framework will also assert very clearly on the treatment to be accorded the outcome of the Dialogue. The outcome of the Dialogue shall be sacrosanct and not be subjected to any review by any other organ of Government or white paper treatment. There shall be no interference whatsoever with any aspect of the outcome of the Dialogue.



During the deliberation period, the proceedings shall be accorded live media coverage for ease of following by Nigerians.

The unedited and undiluted outcome of the Dialogue shall be submitted to the referendum under the control of the Supervising Committee making use of the technical expertise of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with International Observers from African Union (AU).

The Legal Framework shall also stipulate that the approved Dialogue outcome by referendum automatically transforms into the new Constitution of the Federal Republic and all future elections shall derive their legitimacy from same.

The new Constitution of the Federal Republic shall be so proclaimed by the National Assembly as their key official duty before the expiration of their tenure. Since this procedure will be contained in the Pre-Dialogue Legal Framework, it will not involve the states' Assemblies as a result of being a proclamation of a new Constitution as opposed to constitutional amendment which must involve them to be effective.

Critical perusal should be given to the Legal Framework to assess the sincerity of Government on the Dialogue project in order to build the confidence of all stakeholders.

### **3. DURATION**

The duration for the Dialogue shall take no more than one year from commencement up to referendum. The National Assembly should not take more than two months to conclude the constitutional integration of the outcome of the referendum. In total, we are talking of fourteen months or one year two months for the whole project up to proclamation of the new Constitution.

### **4. ISSUES TO BE TABLED BEFORE THE CONFERENCE (AGENDA)**

It is our considered opinion that that dialogue should cover as areas of interest as is demanded by the citizenry without any 'No-Go' areas. Specifically it is our view that the dialogue should cover the following topics:

- a) Desirability or otherwise of Nigeria's continued corporate existence;
- b) Mode of separation, should any part desire so;



- c) Desired changes should the choice be on corporate existence; e.g. type of political system; nature of separation of powers; nature of distribution of powers; etc
- d) Citizenship, indigeneship, and nationality questions;
- e) Resource allocation;
- f) The role of religion in national life;
- g) National language(s).

## **5. ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY BE RELATED OR INCIDENTAL TO THE PROPOSED DIALOGUE / CONFERENCE**

### **NMN Ad-hoc Committee on National Dialogue**

- (1) Prof. Usman El-Nafaty - Chairman
- (2) Engr. Bashir Bello - Secretary
- (3) Dr. Ahmad Bello Dogarawa - Member
- (4) Bro. Sirajudeen Fodayemi AbdulAzeez - Member
- (5) Alhaji Ishaq Kunle Sanni - Member
- (6) Barr. Abdu-Salaam Abbas - Member

*Usmanel-nafaty*

**Prof. Usman A. El-Nafaty**

Chairman, NMN Ad-hoc Committee  
on National Dialogue

*Ibrahimabdulkadir*

**Ibrahim Taiwo Abdulkadir**

Amir, Nigerian Muslims Network (NMN)