

# Strengthening Interfaith Dialogue through Religious Moderation Discourse: An African Perspective

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## ARTICLE INFO

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Published on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
doi: 10.54878/fmrcaw76

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### KEYWORDS

Religion, Moderation, Interfaith Dialogue, Trajectory, African Perspective.

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### HOW TO CITE

Strengthening Interfaith Dialogue through Religious Moderation Discourse: An African Perspective. (2024). 1st International Conference on the Dialogue of Civilization and Tolerance, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.54878/fmrcaw76>

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## ABSTRACT

In the dynamic political landscape of religiously dominated countries, the link between religion and the state is ever-evolving. Understanding these nuances is crucial if the international community is to support positive change in these nations. For instance, the Sub-saharan countries; especially Nigeria, where the population is almost evenly divided between Christianity and Islam. Faith is therefore of crucial spiritual and cultural significance to millions of people across the region. Currently, most nations; especially around the Lake-chad, and indeed, Nigeria are facing large- scale religious, ethnic, political and economic challenges. Intense religious debates around these challenges have led to negative rhetoric, hate speech, discrimination are manifest in escalating tensions and conflicts. History has demonstrated again and again how easy it is for religious leaders and the interfaith community to become inextricably caught up in religious, political, and territorial disputes. However, experts have realized that in most cases religions have been negatively used to justify these criminal atrocities. We have seen several instances of faith leaders grooming radicals and violent extremist youths to perpetrate these crimes in the name of religion. The religious moderation is not new, but many have continuously jettisoned its importance in building cohesion among the people. Hence, religious moderates engaged in politics have actively provided peaceful and conciliatory solutions to safeguard communities from the militants and radicals. This paper will, however, focus on exploring the trajectory of moderation in reducing religious bigotry, hate and discrimination along inter/intra religious divides, and, enhance tolerance and acceptance of others. It further recommends concepts and initiatives that could help exacerbate the importance of the discussion to galvanize partnership support to design and implement a programme of action to promote "religious moderation" in the Sub-saharan region and other parts of the world. This would not only enhance inter-religious understanding, collaboration and peaceful coexistence among religious groups and communities, but creates a peaceful atmosphere for political landscape and sustainable economic development, which is the major essence of Religion. RECOMMENDATIONS Galvanize support and partnership Seek best practices from successful implementations Design projects and programmes of intervention Share our ongoing projects - the establishment of the "International Centre for Religious Moderation" (ICRM) in Nigeria. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION We envision that since we are committed to ensuring that religion plays a pivotal role in achieving global peace and development, discussion around "Moderation" is highly sought to promote its agenda of building the needed nexus between religion and development; especially in the Sub-saharan region of Africa. NAME: Imam Abdulkareem Majemu SHEFIU ORGANIZATION: Strength in

Diversity Development Centre, Nigeria & Interfaith Dialogue Forum for  
Peace in Nigeria