

EAC leaders to discuss peace, security

From MARC NKWAME
in Arusha

MORE than 100 religious and faith-based delegates from Tanzania and its East African Community neighbours; Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, will soon be discussing inter-religious collaboration among different religions and faiths with a view to promoting regional peace and security in the region.

A statement from the EAC Secretariat here indicates that the leaders will attend a four-day conference organized by

the East African Community (EAC) in Kigali, Rwanda, from September 16 to 20, this year.

"The main objective of the conference is to enhance the already existing commitment of religious leaders to collaborate in promoting peace and security in the region," according to the EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Political Federation, Mr Charles Njoroge.

Mr Njoroge added that the desired outcome of the conference would be the establishment of an institutional

framework to coordinate and facilitate the joint action of religious leaders in promoting peace and security in the region.

"The conference is the best opportunity to reflect on not only threats and challenges the region faces, but also opportunities," the EAC official said.

He added that the delegates are expected to develop consensus on the core values that should guide the roles of religious communities in the matters of peace and security and also vis-a-vis the State for

mutual existence, respect and development, among others.

The meeting follows a recommendation made at the second EAC Conference on Peace and Security in Bujumbura, Burundi, in November 2013 to engage religious leaders through the Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs) of Partner States to focus specifically on the responsibilities and challenges that religious leaders have in the region.

The Bujumbura conference was attended by a wide range of political and civil society leaders, including re-

ligious leaders.

A follow-up meeting of a group of religious leaders was held in Mwanza, Tanzania, in May 2014 and Bujumbura, Burundi, in August 2014 when it was resolved that a conference of religious leaders should be held in Kigali, Rwanda.

The Kigali meeting is held under the auspices of the EAC Secretariat and with support from the German Development Agency (GIZ).

The conference will be preceded by a four-day training of 15 selected senior jour-

nalists and editors from the Partner States on religious-sensitive reporting and enhancement of peace and security in the EAC Partner States.

The EAC Secretariat, since 2011, has been organizing a series of trainings for media practitioners in the Partner States on the regional integration process.

Another training opportunity is set for Arusha between September 20 and 24, this year, for film makers and documentary makers. So far about 150 journalists, photo-journalists, photographers

and editors have benefitted from the EAC-GIZ trainings.

The Treaty for Establishment of the East African Community stipulates promotion of peace, security and stability within, and good neighbourliness among EAC Partner States (Article 5 of the Treaty) as one of its core objectives.

The founders of the Community agreed that peace and security are prerequisites to social and economic development and vital to the achievement of the objectives of the Community.