

We the religious leaders under the leadership of the International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC), after a day of deliberation, have reaffirmed our support of the Dakar Declaration in the issue of vaccinations. We are committed to vaccine advocacy in our communities. Our suggestions are as follows,

1. We suggest the government and political leaders be involved in the planning of vaccine advocacy.
2. We suggest WHO and other NGOs learn from the best practice to engage religious leaders in the continent of Africa.

The religious leaders of the two main faiths practiced in our continent, Islam and Christianity, have the moral responsibility and duty to uphold the sanctity of life, to support the preservation and promotion of human life and dignity, and the personal well-being and overall health of human kind. There is divine responsibility entrusted to faith leaders as it is enshrined in our respective holy books.

It goes without saying that we need to take ownership of this life-saving programme, as our Holy Books offer guidance, which deem vaccines permissible and necessary for preservation and protection of human life.

Islam has long ago outlined principles and measures of prevention from diseases and other calamities that we as believers would always need to return to for reference.

I have witnessed, in my own country of Sierra Leone, the effectiveness of engaging religious leaders in such efforts as vaccinations and other community needs. The interreligious leaders of Sierra Leone have contributed tremendously in successful advocacy. In 1986 during the Global Universal Child Immunization Campaign only 6% of children under the age of five were vaccinated from the 6 major diseases. Four years later, it was up to 75%.

Mr. Chairman, as a faith leader from a country that has experienced both great success in meeting past immunization coverage goals and has also experienced one of the worst disease epidemics in recent human history, the Ebola epidemic, I can testify that with the support of, and collaboration and communication with religious leaders and civil societies, any government can meet its commitments on immunization goals for the protection and preservation of its populations.

I have been mandated by my brothers and sisters of the religious and traditional leaders gathered here today who represent their countries in our continent, to express our unanimous support and endorsement of the Declaration of the Ministers.

