

TANZANIA

'Religious leaders have role in reconciliation'

By Amos Msanjila

RELIGIOUS leaders have an important role to play in reconciling political and ethnic groups fighting in Africa despite the difficulties in accomplishing the task, a bishop with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) has said.

Bishop Elinaza Sendoro, retired from ELCT's Eastern and Coastal Diocese, made the remark in a presentation on *Religious Perspective on Reconciliation* at a three-day meeting of the Moral Rearmament Association (MRA) held at Kurasini in Dar es Salaam.

He said armed struggle was

not the proper means to bring about reconciliation.

Bishop Sendoro said religious leaders had a duty to bring about reconciliation because it brought about forgiveness.

"We have been given the ministry of reconciliation," he stressed.

Bishop Sendoro explained

that religious leaders commanded respect in the society as God's ambassadors. "We are called by God to do the job," he said.

Speaking on his last year's experience in reconciling warring factions in the NCCR-Mageuzi, he said the task was a very costly affair in the society.

He said despite his commitment to fulfil his religious duty to end the conflict in the party, he was forced to give up after an 18-hour fruitless meeting of the then leaders of the two factions in that party.

The bishop said reconciliation did not only entail signing agreements but it was also an

issue of mutual exchange of forgiveness and tolerance among individuals.

"People should limit themselves from hatred, selfishness, impurity and dishonesty," he emphasised.

The Moral Rearmament Association (MRA), which was established by Frank Buchman

in 1938, believes in solving social problems through the principle of "changes starting with ourselves." It is open to people of all religions.

The fifth MRA meeting for Africa ended yesterday after the delegates toured Zanzibar and Bagamoyo to visit ancient slave routes.