

Resolution of the Conference on “From Caritas in Veritate to Africae Munus – Today’s Challenges For Africa In The Light Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church” held at Cotonou from March 6-10, 2012

I. Preamble

We, representatives of Justice and Peace Commissions, Catholic Universities, and Institutes of Catholic Social Teaching, from the West Africa region and Egypt, as well as, resource persons from within and outside the region, meeting in Cotonou, Benin from March 6-10 2012, at the invitation of the Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace, and with the support of our partners, Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Catholic Relief Services;

Reflecting deeply on the theme “From Caritas in Veritate to Africae Munus – Today’s Challenges For Africa In The Light Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church” as a follow up to the September 2010 Conference in Accra where the church in Africa reflected on Caritas In Veritate and its import for the message of integral human development on the continent, heed the call “Africa take heart, rise; He’s calling (Mark 10, 49)”, and believe that the Continent is constrained by internal and external influences from taking full advantage of her resources to live the gospel values to the full.

We were enlightened by several presentations on the theme of the conference and concerned about the level of ignorance among the faithful of the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC). Guided by the discussions, we sought answers to the following questions:

- How to address the limited knowledge of the Social Doctrine of the church among the Catholic faithful in the West Africa sub region;
- Who would take responsibility for bringing the Social Doctrine of the church to the faithful at the various levels of the church; and
- How to activate the process by which the Social Doctrine of the Church could be targeted to specific groups and effectively spread in the West Africa sub region.

II. Resolutions

We hereby resolve to:

1. Intensify dissemination of the SDC, using, among other means:
 - a. Our educational institutions (at all levels as the seedbed for growing faithful and integral citizens through the incorporation of the teaching of the SDC into the curricula of these institutions).
 - b. Justice and Peace Commissions (JPCs) more effective instruments for the dissemination of SDC
 - c. Various means of communication, including the traditional and electronic and other Catholic Institutions.
2. Train, the institutions above to disseminate of the SDC.
3. Encourage African leaders to create the enabling environment for self-reliance by drawing their attention to the negative influences of globalization and international aid that undermine the capacity for self-determination and the efficient utilization of their resources for authentic human development in accordance with Africae Munus #86.

4. Highlight the need for greater attention to the global common good and economic justice, in ensuring that the use of Africa's resources for its development does not negatively impact on the people of the continent.
5. Encourage active participation of the church in the monitoring and observation of elections to promote good governance, the legitimacy of power, and in the monitoring of governance between elections.
6. Intensify education of the electorate to provide them with the knowledge and skills that enable them to make informed decisions;
7. Encourage conferences of the church and other agencies to promote programs that form the consciences of men and women willing and able to build a just social order by their responsible conduct in public life;
8. Promote specialized training of the youth as conscientious leaders of tomorrow
9. Encourage the education and formation of women and young girls to respect their dignity and special vocation as nurturers, protectors of life, mothers, and educators.
10. Uphold women's right to property and their participation in public life through capacity building initiatives and increased advocacy for their representation in the church and public life, as well as increasing awareness of their rights and entitlements as equal partners with men in society.
11. Educate society, especially men on the need to eliminate negative cultural beliefs and practices that impinge on the dignity of women and make them subservient to men.
12. Promote advocacy with governments against the adoption of negative values and anti-life policies and ideologies.
13. Develop mechanisms within the Church in Africa in particular, and the Universal Church in general, to support the local church in times of extreme difficulties to facilitate moral leadership for resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation.
14. Invite governments to continue their efforts for the sustainable management, use, and protection of the environment and to encourage every Christian and persons of goodwill to feel responsible for the wellbeing of future generations through the responsible management and protection of creation in accordance with the principle of solidarity.

Date: 10th of March, 2012

Institute of Artisans for Justice and Peace, Cotonou, Benin