



The African Christian Pulse

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Welcome to DRC!

Bishop Pierre Marini Bodho, President of the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) (right) and Rev. Berthe Nzeba Kalombo, General Secretary of the Women's and Family Department of ECC (left).



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In this Issue:

Continuing its efforts for sustainable peace and justice in Africa, the AACC has been present in the four corners of the continent, comforting, speaking out, challenging and keeping alive the light of hope.

In this issue, the African Christian Pulse introduces two areas where AACC continued to advocate for peace. The outbreak of war in the eastern provinces of DRC urged AACC to send an ecumenical delegation of church leaders from Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and AACC; they met both President Kabila of DRC and Kagame of Rwanda, and encouraged them to prioritize dialogue and peaceful discussion on issues of mutual concern to both countries.

Two major summits of African religious leaders gathered in Accra and Addis to commit themselves to work for lasting peace and challenge the leaders of the countries, the population and the force of order to stand for peace as new religious riots broke out in the north of Nigeria. With hope in all these processes, the AACC echoes the words of Micah,

“He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” (Micah 4:3).

ECUMENICAL SOLIDARITY VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The All Africa conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) organized a joint ecumenical solidarity visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 8th to 15th July 2009. The solidarity visit constituted three teams one of which visited Eastern Congo precisely, Goma and Bukavu; the second team visited Bas-Congo and Kasai regions while the third team visited Nkamba - the coordinating center of the Kimbaguist Church.



The Ecumenical delegation after a meeting with H.E President Joseph Kabila of DRC.

The three teams later came together in Kinshasa where a consultation for Women on Transformative Leadership for Peace, Healing and Reconciliation was held. The consultation brought together fifty women participants from various provinces of the DRC and representatives of women networks in Rwanda and

Burundi. The Ecumenical Solidarity visit was led by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, the General Secretary of the WCC accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Andre Karamaga, the General Secretary of the AACC and Rev. Nicta Lubaale, the General Secretary of Organisation of

African Instituted Churches.

During the visit, the leadership of the delegation also had a chance to meet with His Excellency Joseph Kabila, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo ■

WOMEN COMMITTED TO HEALING AND LASTING PEACE

by Vivi Akakpo

Fifty women leaders from AACC and WCC member churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda met in Kinshasa, from July 12th to 14th, for a consultative session under the theme “Transformative



AACC Women and Migration Programme Officer, Mrs Vivi Akakpo

Leadership for Peace, Healing and Reconciliation”. This Consultation followed a 5-day Ecumenical Solidarity visit by the two organizations led by their General Secretaries, Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia and Rev. Dr. André Karamaga from WCC



Participants to the Kinshasa Consultation

and AACC respectively .

Participants in the Consultation expressed their satisfaction to see that the Church recognizes that violence against women in the church and the society exists and the Church is willing to work with women to put an end to it. For them, the Consultation was a kairos moment as it was the first time that a Women's Consultation is held following an Ecumenical Solidarity Visit. Moreover, the situation in the Great Lakes Region in general and in the DRC in particular needed the attention of the World Ecumenical Family.

Participants were moved by the story of one of the victims of violence from Bunia who survived atrocities and lost a leg and her family during the war. Many other stories on violence against women in East Congo, Burundi and Rwanda were shared. The participants called upon the Church to say no to

more violence, rape and killing of women.

In his keynote Address “Wounded Healers and Midwives for Peace”, Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia made reference to the WCC letter from the festival celebrating the end of the decade of churches in solidarity with women (1988-1998) to the WCC 8th assembly in Harare, which acknowledged that violence against women is a sin and therefore an offence against God. It encouraged churches, networks and movements to engage in constructive efforts to overcome such violence in all its manifestations in both church and society.

The main objectives of the Consultation were for the Global Ecumenical Family:

- To offer its solidarity to women of DRC so that they know that they are not

alone in their struggles.

- To create the space for women to network with each other from all corners of DRC and also with their sisters who have come from other parts of the world.

- To recognize the important efforts women make in working towards healing and reconciliation. We know that here in DRC, women face violation with resilience. In many cases, they have to forego their own pain so as to reach out to others for healing from trauma caused by all forms of violence. Women in the DRC are indeed wounded healers that give hope to situations which would otherwise be hopeless.

- To make visible to the UN and governments through the World Council of Churches, the work of peace building and reconciliation that women carry out so that at the end of the day they can also be brought to the negotiation table for peace and conflict resolution.

Apart from the fifty women, the Consultation registered the participation of about 15 Church Leaders from the DRC ■

ORIENTATION COURSE FOR NEWLY ELECTED HEADS OF CHURCHES

The AACC organized in Nairobi, Kenya a one week orientation course for newly elected heads of Churches/Dioceses/Presbyteries/Synods. The course took place from 6th to 10th July 2009.

When this course was announced in early April 2009 we received overwhelming positive responses. Below are samples of the responses from heads of churches:

“Thanks for initiating this kind of course for Church Leaders in Africa. I think that AACC is really beginning to become the AACC by addressing issues facing its member churches.” Rev. Canon Enock Tombe – Episcopal Church of Sudan.

“Warm greetings from Kinshasa with many thanks for your message and its attachment. We applaud this initiative. This is one of areas our churches have a lot of problems. I do not have a candidate to recommend at the moment, but I appreciate the initiative.” Bishop David K. Yemba – AACC Vice President (DR Congo).

“Thank you for the message. We, as African Churches, welcome this new initiative of offering such a good training to new Church leaders. We have to confess that most of us who have been serving for so long have had difficulties



Participants of the orientation course for newly elected heads of Churches

in adjusting to leadership, due to lack of training in leadership, or even not finding people who would be willing to share their experience with us. This initiative has come at the right time for the African Church to have an opportunity to train and think together in order to move together for the good cause of Unity in Christ.” Bishop Pie Ntukamazina - Diocese of Bujumbura, Burundi.

By mid June 2009 we had received course applications from 62 Anglophone and 17 Francophone bishops, moderators and senior clergy. Since we could not accommodate all of them we began with a class of 38 heads of churches. The remaining candidates will be called later this year for the same course.

This first course attracted participants from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda.

The most encouraging thing about these participants is that almost all of them paid their full air ticket from their respective countries.

The course objective was to enable the church leaders appreciate their roles as stewards called to serve the Church and evolve strategies for improving stewardship and accountability within their Churches.

To realize the above objectives the course covered the following topics:

- Your calling as Steward of God's resources

- Basic management functions in the administration of the church
- Strategic planning for the churches
- The sustainability of the churches in Africa
- Ecumenism in Africa and Relations with Agencies

- Sharing of experiences in the life and work of a bishop
- The role of the church in Peace building, conflict resolution and the need to combat corruption
- Interfaith relations
- Visit to Kenyan successful church projects or programmes

to share the sustainability case studies

The course was facilitated by the AACC Senior staff assisted by a few consultants from church based organizations■

THE RESPONSE OF CHURCHES IN THE DRC CRISIS

By Karin Doehne, from EED- member of the team to Bas-Congo and Kasai

The effects of war and crisis are not only experienced in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. By visiting the two provinces of Bas Congo and Kasai Oriental in the context of the Ecumenical Solidarity Visit we learnt how other areas have become affected too. Economic hardships and lacking perspectives, in particular for the youth, result in frustration – a fertile ground for political movements which become increasingly radical and thus polarise the population. Violence, war and crisis change the culture, the values and the way people live together. People tend to move away from remote places looking for opportunities and protection in the towns, hence urbanisation is speeding up. Consequently, the patterns of family and relationship between men and women change. Women and

children suffer under increasing violence. However, women as the back bone of economic productivity and carer of families are contributing to solutions out of the crisis.

What are the churches doing specifically?

1) Firstly, they continue the pastoral work of congregations. This may sound like nothing special. Yet, it is of utmost importance to give people hope, encouragement, feeling at home. For example, in spite of being impoverished, people in Mbuji Mayi still invest in new church buildings. Whereas in the past the mining society was providing, it is now the people themselves who are constructing with their own means, even when progress is slow.

2) Supported by the respective departments and programmes, congregations work on issues of

how to **live in peace** with each other, how to accept foreigners and welcome them as members. In Matadi for example we witnessed an example of the successful integration of a refugee family into a local congregation.

3) **Ecumenism** practised by the ECC, but also by other churches through membership in local coordinating committees for various purposes, is a strong signal that cooperation, trust and respect are possible in spite of differences.

4) The churches are the biggest **service providers** in terms of health and education (more than 150,000 students studying in church institutions in Bas Congo, 1,400 schools in Kasai) in the country. Examples we visited are the Institute Medicale Evangelique, which runs a 400-bed hospital and trains doctors and nurses, and

the Centre Evangelique pour la Cooperation in Kimpese, which is in charge of hundreds of schools and a university. In Mbuji Mayi we saw church-run schools and were informed on the health work. Schools are seen as an important field where children can learn and practice peaceful co-existence and counter balance the voices (and actions) of those who spread conflict and tension. The medical services not only offer physical care, but also psychosocial and spiritual care for those who suffer from trauma.

5) Churches deal with **social problems**. In Kasai this is the department “urgances” which cares for street children and looks into issues such as prostitution and demining. In Bas Congo the Centre Régional d'Appui et de Formation pour le Développement mobilises rural villages for community development and tackles the problems of deforestation and ecological damage. It supports local farmers to market their products.

6) Churches give a voice to the population and express their

concern regarding important socio-political issues such as:

- Who are the promoters of war, who supplies them with weapons? In Matadi it was stated that there are outside forces at work too. Outside nations such as the USA, France, Belgium and the EU are part of the game, fuelling the conflicts by pursuing their economic and political agendas which have nothing to do with the interests of the people of Bas Congo.
- Regarding the planning of major projects such as the INGA barrage No III, a deep water port in Matadi, the oil exploitation in the Bas Congo region, the church is demanding proper participation of the representatives of the population. Such projects must benefit the local people too.
- The situation of immigrants and refugees needs to be reflected more systematically. Ethnic belonging though a constituting part of identity

should not determine who belongs to communities and who remains an outsider, foreigner. This applies to the society as a whole, but also to the churches congregations.

- The guiding principle for the exploitation of natural resources of a nation must be the benefit and well being of the population, local and national. The churches do not keep quiet in the face of the scandal of resource exploitation for financing death and greed.
- Together with the ecumenical family worldwide crimes and wrong doings of private companies and the political involvement of other nations need to be exposed.

We observed that the churches want to continue to use their different avenues of influence in the country. In doing so they shall be encouraged and supported by the worldwide ecumenical family■

AACC'S INVOLVEMENT IN INTERFAITH RELATIONS

The AACC has always been committed to promote peace through interfaith dialogue and from this

commitment the Deputy General Secretary of AACC, Mr. Bright Mawudor participated in the interfaith

meeting which took place in Accra, Ghana, from 20th -24th July, 2009. We are glad to share with our readers the



Religious leaders in the Addis Ababa meeting

communiqué produced by the meeting.

On 30th-31st July, another interfaith meeting took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that was hosted by the African Union. The General Secretary of AACC, Rev. Dr. André Karamaga represented the AACC. And we are also glad to share the communiqué resulting from that gathering.

I

THE ACCRA COMMUNIQUÉ

We, sixty (60) Christian and Muslim religious leaders from ten (10) West African States that include Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo met in Accra, Ghana under the auspices of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) on the theme: "Religion and Prevention of Conflict, Peace Building and Reconciliation" at the M-Plaza Hotel, from July 20-24, 2009.

Having deliberated on such issues as: Religious Leaders as Agents of Peace, peace between the religions as a prerequisite for religious leaders to promote peace within

the wider society, negative religious expansionist policies, the politicization of religion, globalization / internationalization of conflicts, negative solidarity, the challenge of translating good precepts in religion into good practice in everyday life, causes of conflicts, and advocacy for peace by example;

Having received Case Studies on Christians and Muslims Collaboration for Peace from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte D'Ivoire, and Nigeria;

Aware that religion and religious differences have always been exploited for political, economic, communal and personal interest which have caused the deaths of thousands of our brothers and sisters and the destruction of properties;

Very Concerned at the violent confrontations in our individual countries carried out by some of our followers;

Recognizing that there are some positive improvements in Christian and Muslim Collaboration for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation;

Understanding and accepting that as Religious Leaders we must

at all times be Agents of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation and must live by example; Reconciliation in the West African region in Particular and Africa in general;

Accordingly, as Religious Leaders coming from the two major Religions in the West African region, and representing millions of persons of faith,

Do hereby resolve and reaffirm our willingness and determination to continue to remain in solidarity with each other in the furtherance and sustainability of Peace, Justice, Healing and **resolve** as follows:

- That we would lead by example and take responsibility to Promote Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in our region;
- That we would embark on a campaign to create awareness and sensitization within the religious communities to promote positive religious tolerance for peace and peaceful co-existence;
- That we would respect and appreciate each other's religious values, beliefs and practices;



Left: Dr. Elham M. A. Ibrahim, AU Infrastructure and Energy Commissioner addresses religious leaders.

within the Sub-Region;

We as Religious Leaders have adopted the above and have resolved to continue to work together to promote positive religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence, addressing Peace, Justice, Healing and Reconciliation.

Done in Accra, Ghana this 24th Day of July 2009.

**II
STATEMENT BY
CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM
RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON
PEACE BUILDING
IN THE HORN OF AFRICA
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
30TH – 31ST JULY 2009**

- That we would collectively engage national governments, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and along with our counterparts in the various regions of Africa, the African Union (AU) to urge for responsible governance and democracy

Call on Religious Leaders

- We call on all Religious Leaders to continue to be Prophetic and proactive at all times without fear or favour;
- We call on religious leaders to be politically impartial and refrain from partisan politics so as to ensure that we play effective roles as Agents of Peace Justice and Reconciliation;
- We call on the followers of our respective religions to complement each others efforts for peace in society and peaceful co-existence among themselves and avoid negative tendencies which

have the propensity for conflicts;

- As both Holy Books (the Bible and Qur'an) place emphasis on Peace, that as religious leaders we practice Peace in fulfillment of the tenets of our respective religions.

Call on Government

- We call on Governments and Political leaders in the Sub-Region to practice good and responsible governance and guarantee peaceful transitions from one duly elected government to the other;
- We appreciate and thank those governments that have created an enabling environment for dialogue with religious leaders, and call on others to create the same;
- We call on Governments to ensure that Child and Drug trafficking be eradicated

We, the religious leaders representing the Christian and Muslim faiths from the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) countries meeting in Addis Ababa on 30th - 31st July 2009, to deliberate on Peace Building, Healing and Reconciliation in the Horn of Africa;

Acknowledging the mercies of the Almighty God on us as we spent time together, sharing our thoughts with each other and developing bonds amongst us;

Expressing heartfelt thanks to the Ethiopian Government and the African Union (AU) and appreciation to the Ethiopian Interfaith Platform and His Holiness the Patriarch Abuna Paulos for hosting us; the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL), and the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) for convening the meeting;

Having reflected on a wide range of issues relating to the peace, security and stability in the Horn of

Africa within the context of inter-faith relations in the region for the past two days;

Celebrating our African identity, unity in diversity and our journey in the African history of liberation, restoration of justice and human dignity;

Deeply concerned about the endemic conflicts and persistent insecurity in the region, especially in Somalia, Sudan and Northern Uganda, caused or aggravated by, economic stagnation and poverty, mistrust and suspicion, massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization;

Gravely troubled about the humanitarian and social consequences of the crises;

Bearing in mind the sub-human and abhorring conditions under which many of our people in the Horn of Africa live, either in the internally displaced persons camps or refugee camps;

Recognizing that the internal conflicts have a regional impact that could adversely affect the peace and security in the whole region and beyond;

Seeking to deepen our understanding and analysis of the root causes and agents of conflicts in the region;

Convinced of the fact that religious leaders have a role and mandate in contributing towards peace and reconciliation process in the region;

We, the Christian and Muslim leaders together with the institutions we represent do hereby commit ourselves to undertake, a series of actions to bring fruition to the work that we have done in the last two days. In this regard, we have collectively resolved to:-

- 1 Sustain and intensify our prayers for peace in the Horn of Africa;
- 2 Actively continue engaging in sincere Interfaith-dialogue, trust building and collaboration for peace in each of our countries and in the region;
- 3 Remain committed to the cause of peace, Justice, healing, and reconciliation in the Horn of Africa and seek to do everything within our capacity to reduce further escalation of violent conflict in the region;
- 4 Facilitate spiritual renewal by instilling and imparting positive values, within our families, mosques, churches, schools and Communities;

5 Build stronger networks between the religious leaders in the Horn of Africa to enhance peace and security in the region;

6 Establish linkages with Africa Union (AU) and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD);

7 Engage in value based holistic civic education

8 Initiate coordinated advocacy and lobby strategies for peace in the region;

9 Engage in humanitarian assistance to the affected population in the region;

10 Convene a wider regional peace conference for religious leaders from the Horn of Africa by December 2009.

Finally, with the help of the Almighty God and inspiration from our people, we make a joint and firm Commitment towards the journey of building peace in the Horn of Africa and invite all the people of goodwill, the Governments of the region and other stakeholders to join us.■



CALL FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA

While religious leaders were meeting in the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the whole continent became deeply concerned about the violence that occurred in Northern Nigeria and issued the following short statement.

**STATEMENT BY
CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM
RELIGIOUS LEADERS
FROM THE HORN OF
AFRICA (IGAD)
COUNTRIES TO THE
RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN
NIGERIA, THE INTER-
RELIGIOUS COUNCIL
(NIREC) AND THE PEOPLE
OF NIGERIA ON THE
VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA**

We the religious leaders from the Horn of Africa (IGAD) countries

meeting at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa on 30th-31st July, 2009;

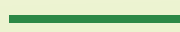
Are deeply concerned about the on-going violence in Northern Nigeria in the last four days. We are particularly troubled by the resulting loss of lives and destruction from violence;

We appeal to the government of Nigeria, the religious leaders and elders to intensify their efforts in finding peaceful solutions to the ongoing and recurrent violence in Nigeria.

We ask the religious communities in Nigeria to continue to intensify and sustain measures that prevent conflicts from occurring.

We pray and hope that normalcy will return to the region affected by the conflict;

Signed by: Religious leaders from Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda; Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA); African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL); All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) ■





H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda after a meeting with Church Leaders from DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

**WE INVITE YOU ALL TO SHARE YOUR STORIES AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH
THE AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PULSE**

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