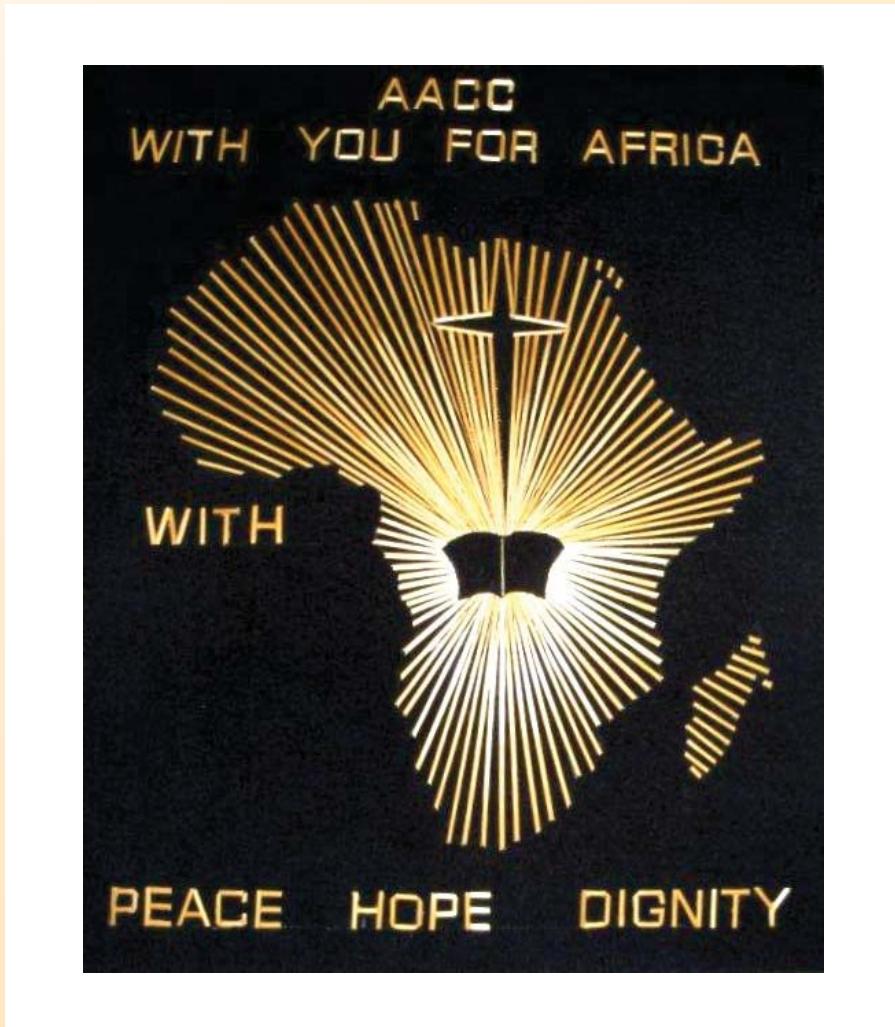




The African Christian Pulse

A Bulletin of the All Africa Conference of Churches

July-August, 2010



aacc



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A GOOD MODEL TO COPY

Elders and retired church leaders in Kenya have formed a forum known as the Senior Clergy Consultative Forum (SCCF) which meets from time to time to discuss major concerns for the church and the nation. This Forum comprises of retired church leaders from most of the denominations across the country including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, the Catholic Church, Pentecostals and African Instituted churches among others.

In their meeting at the AACC Desmond Tutu Conference Center on 27th July 2010, they focused on Kenya's constitutional referendum which was coming up on August 4th 2010. As it is known



Senior clergy consultative forum.

by all, In 2008, Kenya's post election period was marked by violence and averting such a situation in the future has become a matter of pre-occupation for everyone. Retired church leaders therefore met to share their message with the politicians and the Kenyan society as a whole.

In many countries, retired leaders are isolated from important undertakings thus inadequately utilizing experiences and wisdom that they had accumulated over many years of service. May be, this model could be copied in other countries because as Africans, we believe in the special contribution of such leaders ■

RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR PEACE

1. ABUJA, NIGERIA

A High profile delegation of the AACC took part in the first interfaith forum jointly organized with the African Union in Abuja, Nigeria from 15 – 17 June 2010 under the theme “Role of religious communities in promoting justice, peace, security and development in Africa”. This interfaith summit brought together about 60 religious

leaders from diverse religious traditions, Christians, Muslims, African traditional religion and Hinduism. Others who addressed the conference were: His Excellency Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the President of Nigeria, the Vice President of the AU Commission, the Sultan of Sokoto and The Rt. Rev. Dr. Aboagye-Mensah – Vice President of AACC West Africa who was heading the AACC delegation.

The fact that the African Union took a strong part in organizing this consultation with AACC and other religious organizations, shows how the African Union takes seriously the role and contribution of religious leaders in Africa. The AACC remains committed on its turn to take seriously this openness and collaboration and we strongly hope that together we can change the face and the image of our beloved continent.

The following is an excerpt of the communiqué.

COMMITMENT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

“ACKNOWLEDGING the supremacy of the Almighty God,

WE, the African Union (AU) and African Religious Leaders meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, 15 – 17 June 2010, for the launch of the AU-Interfaith Dialogue Forum...

WE affirm the need to structure and strengthen the partnership between the AU and Religious Leaders for advancing justice, peace, security and development in Africa; and commit ourselves to advocacy, building capacity, mobilization of resources, and maintenance of consultations at all levels;

WE undertake to ensure an inclusive partnership involving all relevant stakeholders to collaborate in advocacy, promotion and supporting accountable governance to address the challenges related to corruption at all levels;

WE strive to maintain consultations and information sharing within our respective constituencies on this partnership

WE resolve to formalize the partnership by establishing a Permanent Steering Committee of fifteen (15) Senior Religious Leaders consisting of six (6) Christians, six (6) Muslims, one (1) Hindu and two (2) from African Traditional Religions to provide leadership, facilitate and

coordinate the process of interactions with the AU

WE agree to provide the leadership at continental, regional, national and local levels to ensure effective mobilization and follow-up processes.

WE commit ourselves to ensure that the Permanent Steering Committee will comprise religious leaders with credibility, integrity and stature;

WE identify that the Steering Committee, the Apex Body, for the partnership shall receive technical support from the AUC through the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate



The Interfaith Summit in Abuja, Nigeria

(CIDO) in line with its statutory functions and will serve as the focal point and hub for the interfaith dialogue within the AU; it will assume responsibility for coordinating its relations with the various organs of the AU and planning of subsequent Interfaith Forums. The African Council of Religious Leaders - *Religions for Peace* (ACRL-RfP) will serve as its technical partner in this process and provide, as required, appropriate secretariat and logistic support to facilitate the work of the Permanent Steering Committee.

WE commit to take advantage of

the platform of cooperation provided by the Interfaith Dialogue complemented by strengthening existing AU interface processes and opportunities. In particular, efforts must be made to increase the access of religious communities to Observer Status in the AU; and strive to establish regional liaison offices in Addis Ababa that could facilitate increased cooperation with the AU System. CIDO, as the responsible body within the AU Commission, shall assist in the process of increasing AU – Religious Community nexus; the leadership of the AU Commission should support these efforts as part of the interfaith cooperation platform.

WE resolve to hold the AU - Interfaith Dialogue Forum in every two (2) years.

WE subscribe to all existing African peace and security architecture particularly as contained in the Peace and Security Protocol and other instruments of the AU”

2. WINNIPEG, CANADA

In June, the AACC participated in the interfaith religious leaders summit which took place in Winnipeg, Canada and enriched the debate by reporting about the African experience in peace building and conflict transformation. the following is an excerpt from the communiqué.

A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action

“We, 80 senior leaders of the world's religions and faith-based



Rev. Suzanne Matala addresses participants in Canada

organizations together with 13 youth delegates, from more than 20 countries representing Aboriginal, Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, and Sikh religious traditions, have convened in Winnipeg, Manitoba on the eve of Canada hosting expanded global summits...

Acknowledging our common humanity and embracing the imperative to treat all persons with dignity, we affirm that no one

person is more or less valuable than another...

From our shared values we call on leaders to take courageous and concrete actions:

- To meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable while simultaneously making structural changes to close the unacceptable growing gap between rich and poor;

- To prioritize long-term environmental sustainability and halt the harmful acceleration of climate change caused by us, while addressing its impacts on the poor; and

- To work for peace and remove factors that feed cycles of violent conflict and costly militarism.” ■

ECUMENICAL SOLIDARITY WITH THE PACIFIC

A team of church representatives paid a solidarity visit to churches, ecumenical organizations and civil society movements in Fiji from 27-29 May 2010. The team travelled as “Living letters” on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC) with the participation of Mr. Arthur Shoo the Director of Empowerment and Capacity Building at AACC.



The living letters team

The People of Pacific who have contributed least to the global threat of Climate Change are already suffering it and will

continue to suffer most. The weather once predictable has

become totally unpredictable, with heavier rains, stronger

winds and greater cyclone intensities. This has caused sea levels to rise threatening the inhabitants of some of the small islands to submerge.

The mission was concluded by requesting all the humanity to respond to the Pacific Peoples pledge to put more pressure on the national and international advocacy on the attention of the

policy makers to take urgent measures needed to stop polluting the atmosphere which in turn is the major cause of Climate change.

ECUMENICAL WATER NETWORK MEETING

The Ecumenical Water Network, in which AACC participates, held its Steering Group Meeting in Geneva on 21 – 22 June 2010. The meeting discussed planned activities for the year 2010 and 2011 and in particular the budget, because the network has received cuts in its funding. EWN activities for 2011 include participation in the International Ecumenical Convocation for Peace (IECP) in Jamaica in 2011 and hosting the annual conference of members of the network.

However, the important agenda item that related to the future status of EWN, specifically whether any of the following options would be adopted; EWN as full program of WCC, or become a part of Act

Alliance, as an independent organization or retain the status quo. The decision was deferred to September 2010 to give members of the Steering Group time to consult.

The AACC considers water as a critical issue in the continent and sent Mrs. Mbari Kioni to attend the meeting because the usual AACC representative Rev. Dr. Ben-Naimah, was not available. The network has held two consultations on water in Africa in Uganda in 2007 and in Lesotho in 2008. The Steering Group discussed follow up strategies specifically focusing on Africa. The discourse on water in Africa is important as statistics indicate that 4000 children die every day globally from diseases related to unsafe water

and inadequate sanitation.

The meeting also discussed the submission of “good practices” in water for submission to the UN Human Rights Council – Independent Expert on human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The Independent Expert is expected to hold consultations on good practices with Civil Societies Organizations in September 2010. Additionally, further consultations are expected to be held with governments and national human rights institutions at a later date. It was agreed by the Steering Group to send a letter in support of the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert which expires in September 2011 ■

AACC's PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN FORUM

Country Consultations on the Open Forum for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Development Effectiveness came to a close on 11th August 2010 when the last Country consultation ended in Johannesburg, South Africa.

From the onset of the programme, the Open Forum aimed at using country



Partners speak at the CSO consultation meeting in Cameroon.

consultations to address the various concerns that CSO raised in relation to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005 which was essentially a deal between donors and recipient governments. Country consultations were therefore primarily aimed at refocusing the development debate from effectiveness of aid delivery to effectiveness of development.

It was within such a background that the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) accepted to be the leading consortium for the Open Forum in Sub-Sahara Africa where it has coordinated consultations in 15 countries including Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia, Uganda, Ghana, Rwanda, Angola and South Africa. Indeed, the Open Forum understands that churches are also part of the civil society and they would therefore be in these consultations. It was appreciated that AACC had been interested in issues to do



Participants at the CSO consultation held at the Methodist Guest House in Kinshasa, 17-18 May, 2010.

with the role of CSO's in development and that it also had elaborate structures and networks which it would utilize in its coordination role.

The consultation process began with the Africa Regional Consultation that took place in Nairobi on 27th -28th January 2010. Reports from country consultations indicate that the consultations were very enriching and informative for their organizations as co-actors in development. These reports also indicate that donors and representatives of governments actively participated in country

consultations. It is anticipated that the global report - which will be bringing together all the reports from North America and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, Europe and from International CSOs – will be useful in influencing the positions taken by donors and governments starting at the 28-30 August 2010 Global Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey and later at the High Level Forum IV in Seoul, South Korea in December 2011 ■

RWANDA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The AACC deployed a team of three observers led by Mrs. Mbari Kioni, the Director for Peace Healing and Reconciliation to the Rwanda Presidential Elections held on 9th August 2010 at the invitation of the Protestant Council Of Rwanda (CPR). The AACC team joined

29 local observers drawn from the Protestant Council of Churches who were deployed in each of the 30 districts.

The team held a briefing meeting with the General Secretary of the Council Dr Tharcisse Gatwa on 5th August before travelling to the districts

for the observation. Dr Gatwa indicated that the Council had been actively engaged in civic/voter education and had held a seminar in December 2009 on Civic Rights and Civic Responsibility and which was attended by 40 participants from the member Churches.

The elections were held in a peaceful atmosphere with a huge voter turn out. Two main positive attributes were noted by the AACC observers:-

- Presidential elections are considered a celebration and polling stations are decorated by the communities
- The National election Commission hires volunteers as polling officials.

These two factors contributed immensely to a sense of ownership in the electoral process and enhanced unity amongst the people of Rwanda. Although the team's mission was limited in terms of time and duration the team indicated that a number of irregularities were noted in the process of polling however the Team considered such irregularities not to be of major impact on the overall results. Arising from the observations the team made a



The group of AACC and CPR observers.

number of recommendations which formed part of the Council's report to the Election Commission, these included inter alia;-

- Adequate training of NEC staff
- Serialization of ballot papers
- Adequate training of party representatives

- Greater efforts to reduce illiteracy and enhance voter/civic education
- The Council to engage with civil society on the electoral process.

The team concluded that the elections were peaceful and reflected the will of the people of Rwanda ■



Pomp and dance on the election day in Rwanda



The identity of a polling station.

FROM THE ECUMENICAL SPECIAL ENVOY TO SUDAN OFFICE

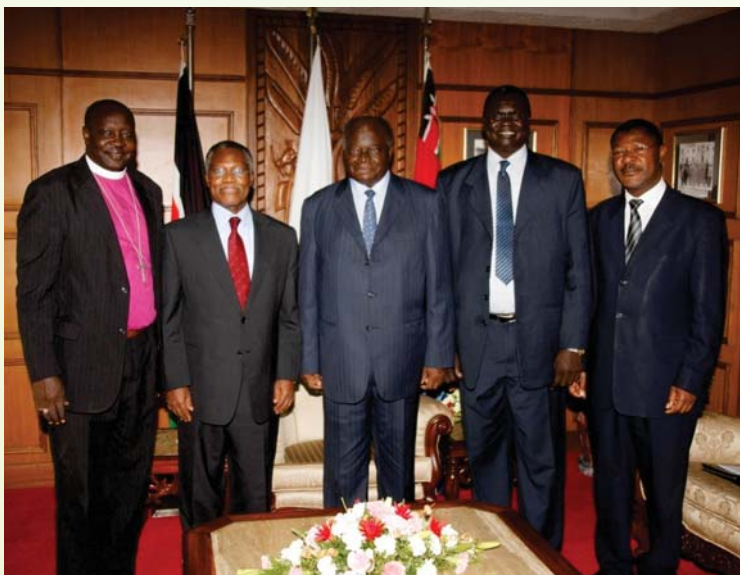
Following repeated calls by Sudanese churches to rescue the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in Naivasha in 2005, from collapsing, the latest of which were made during the August 2009 Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) General Assembly in Khartoum and later at the November 2009 Sudan Ecumenical Forum's (SEF) Assembly in Juba, the AACC in consultation with the WCC and SCC, declared 2010 a special year for Sudan. This led to the establishment of the office of the Ecumenical Special Envoy to Sudan during AACC's Executive Committee's meeting held on 24th and 25th March 2010.

Historically, the situation in the Sudan has always been very high in the ecumenical agenda in Africa and the Sudan has been one of the focus countries for the AACC since the organization was founded in 1963. In the 1960s, the AACC, WCC and Sudan churches were at the forefront of the peace process that led to the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972.

The Ecumenical Special Envoy - Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia - and

his delegation have worked proactively to share and interpret messages that have been formulated by churches in Sudan in the document "Choose Life: A Vision for a Peaceful Sudan". These message can be summed up into three components;

I. Respect the integrity of the CPA - including the timetable and referenda that



SCC leadership and the Ecumenical Envoy with President Kibaki.

is scheduled to take place on 9th January 2011 as provided for by the CPA.

II. Peaceful processes - towards the referendum and maintenance of peace in the post-referendum period with acceptance of referendum results. The SCC is keen to promote peace and reconciliation, civic/voter education and bridge building between the government, the people and the churches among other

actors.

III. Civic and voter education – for the church to actively participate in preparing the people for the referendum.

Meetings held with Leadership of the guarantors of the CPA included the following:-

- President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya.
- Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa in his capacity as the Chairman of Africa Union Panel on Sudan.
- President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, and the Vice-President of Sudan.
- Vice President Riek Machar, GOSS.
- General (Rtd) Scot Gration, the US Special Envoy to Sudan.
- Amro Musa,

the Secretary General of the Arab League.

- Hon. Moses Wetangula, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenya.
- General (Rtd) Lazaro Sumbeiyu, Chair of Sudan Peace Talks leading to the signing in 2005 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).
- The Director General, ministry of foreign Affairs of Norway, and the

Norwegian ambassador in Geneva, Switzerland.

- Consuls general of Norway, UK and Germany in Juba.
- Rev. Dr. Olav Tveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches (WCC).
- Rev. Dr. Andre Karamaga, General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).
- Canon Peter Karanja, General Secretary, National Council of Churches of

Kenya (NCCCK).

In these meetings, the integrity of the CPA, referendum timelines and the acceptance of the referendum results, the importance of maintaining peace and security for all the people of Sudan before, during and after the elections and referenda and popular consultations have been affirmed by all actors and the international community.

In the coming weeks and months, the time and energies of the Ecumenical Special Envoy and his team will be concentrated towards giving support to the Church in Sudan and her partners to be actively engaged in the upcoming referendum through continuing of high level advocacy ■



UPCOMING EVENTS

Somalia

1-2 September 2010, Consultation on Somalia in Nairobi, Kenya.

Youth for Peace

18-21 September 2010, meeting of AACC Youth for Peace in Nairobi, Kenya.

Church Leaders

18-23 September 2010, Madagascar Church Leaders Consultation, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Finance and Personnel; and Executive Committee

21 September 2010, morning - the AACC Finance and Personnel Committee
afternoon - Executive Committee.

Reference Group on Sudan

21 September 2010, the Reference Group on Sudan Initiative, in Nairobi, Kenya.

World Council of Churches (WCC)

21-27 September 2010, the WCC General Secretary will visit Africa, specifically Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

Overcoming Violence

22 September 2010, Seminar on Overcoming Violence and the challenge of lasting peace in Africa which will be held at the AACC Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

General Committee

23-24 September 2010, a meeting of the AACC General Committee.

Board of Trustees

25 September 2010, a meeting of the AACC Board of Trustees.

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

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