

AMECEA YOUTH WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUÉ

Communication at the Service of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

Workshop convened in Nairobi, Kenya 26– 30 April 2009

The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) in partnership with the Pontifical Council for Social Communications organised this Youth Communication Workshop under the theme “*Communication at the Service of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*” convened in Nairobi, Kenya at Savelberg Retreat Centre from 26 -30 April 2009.

Preamble

To all people of good will!

WE the AMECEA youth, in collaboration with our national justice and peace departments, following closely in the footsteps of the 16th AMECEA Plenary Assembly held in Lusaka, Zambia 2008, by our Catholic Bishops of the AMECEA Region which encompasses Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and the affiliate members of Djibouti and Somalia greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Shalom!

INSPIRED by the forthcoming Synod of Bishops for Africa to be held in Rome from 4 -25 October 2009 under the theme “*The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: 'You Are the Salt of the Earth... You Are the Light of the World' (Mt 5:13, 14)*”;

APPRECIATING the role of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in making this youth workshop possible;

AWARE OF the important role that the youth of Africa and AMECEA, in particular, can play in fostering justice, peace and reconciliation in our societies;

RECOGNISING nonetheless the difficult and tragic conflicts that still afflict Africa;

The Youth workshop states the following:

1. Appreciation

The youth workshop greatly appreciates the AMECEA secretariat and the Pontifical Council for Social Communications for hosting the first-ever AMECEA youth workshop. In particular, we appreciate the presence and support given by His Grace Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and his team, the Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya, Most Rev. Alain Paul Lebeaupin, Right Rev. Emmanuel Obbo, Chairman of AMECEA Social Communications department, Right Rev. Paul Duffy, Chairman of AMECEA Justice and Peace department. We thank our able facilitators. Also appreciated at the workshop, is the presence of Mr. Benedict Assorow, Director of Communications at the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

2. Solidarity with Eritrea and affiliate members of Somalia and Djibouti

As youth attending this workshop, we express our profound regret that the youth of Eritrea could not join the workshop due to the repressive laws of Eritrea which restrict the movement of many Eritreans from leaving their country.

The workshop equally expresses sadness that due to several difficulties in Somalia /Djibouti, the youth of these countries have not been able to attend this workshop.

As youth of AMECEA, we express our solidarity and prayers with these troubled nations. In the meantime, we appeal to the African Union and other progressive bodies to continue lobbying these countries to improve their governance and Human Rights records.

We express our hope that all these obstacles shall one day be overcome.

3. We shall not be tools of violence

Our African political leadership should espouse peace and take deliberate steps to strengthen the socio-economic structures of our societies as a means of reducing conflict in Africa. As the youth of the AMECEA region, we recognise that we too can play an important role towards an authentic, dynamic rebirth of Africa through emphasizing messages of peace and refusing to be used by selfish politicians, as tools of conflict, division and violence.

4. Media for peace

We call upon the media in Africa to embrace peace and professionalism. In particular, Catholic media should be at the forefront of conflict resolution and promoting peace.

To foster reconciliation through justice and peace, African Catholic youth involved in media should promote messages of hope.

In this regard, we urge all communicators in the region to collaborate and network, hold meetings, workshops, training, share information, radio and TV programmes with the view of fostering justice, peace and reconciliation.

5. We are the digital generation

As the youth of Africa, we acknowledge the ever changing socio-economic and political world. We therefore encourage Catholic media institutions in the AMECEA region to develop workable strategies and mechanisms that promote the use of new media (the Internet, amateur videos, mobile phones etc) to speak the language of the youth and spread the message of evangelization. The new technologies offer limitless opportunities but are also open to abuse. We therefore, at the same time, call for prudence and caution in the use of these technologies.

6. Proud of our diverse African identity

Rather than considering our different tribes and religions as a barrier, we acknowledge these differences are gifts. We also realise that justice and peace involve concerted efforts that include inter-ethnic dialogue and inter-religious dialogue. We appeal to all those who dialogue to always work towards mutual respect and conducive environments in order for peace to prosper.

We also call upon our fellow Catholic youth to rise to the occasion and live their Christian identity and witness in society with pride. We encourage them to re-discover our rich cultural African identity and model their lives after the African saints such as the Uganda Martyrs, St. Bakhita and modern icons such as Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere and others.

7. The importance of Formation

We humbly remind our Spiritual and Church leadership to promote youth formation and education. Where possible, suitable chaplains should be appointed to accompany the youth, of Africa, in their journey through life.

In particular, we wish to be adequately exposed to the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. This will equip the youth of Africa to know their civic, political and social rights as well as their duties and responsibilities, from the Church's point of view.

The youth in the media should also be provided with opportunities of formation so that they can effectively promote justice, peace and reconciliation.

8. Conflict in Africa is multifaceted

While we recognise that the causes of conflict in Africa are historical and many-sided, we however note that bad governance in our countries has often led to entrenched poverty and the increase of disease in the AMECEA countries. Poverty has continued to divide our people between the rich and the poor. We appeal to our African governments to prioritise the poor of our

societies and adopt good policies in the distribution of resources. This will go a long way in reducing conflict. In fact, our governments need to redouble their efforts in fighting corruption within their ranks, noting that this vice deprives resources needed for investment in youth empowerment programmes, education, jobs and recreation facilities.

As youth, we pledge to continue advocating for good governance, the reduction of corruption in our societies and the eradication of HIV and AIDS among our people.

9. Gratitude

Finally, we thank the sponsors and partners who have supported this workshop with their generosity. We acknowledge the many friendships that this workshop has enabled us to forge and we resolve to stay in contact and to work for justice, peace and reconciliation wherever we will be.

Signed under by the youth representatives of the following countries:

Ethiopia	_____
Malawi	_____
Kenya	_____
Tanzania	_____
Sudan	_____
Uganda	_____
Zambia	_____