

**18th AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Lilongwe, Malawi
(16th to 26th July, 2014)**

Government guarantees Freedom of Religion in the Country

BY PRINCE HENDERSON

The government of Malawi will continue to promote freedom of religion and peaceful coexistence of all faith communities in the country.

Speaking during the mass marking the official opening ceremony of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) 18th plenary assembly at Civo Stadium in Lilongwe, President Mutharika called upon the church to hold hands with government to unswervingly commit themselves in fighting secularism and promote values that guide the faith community.

The President Mutharika also commended the Catholic Church for its roles it plays in Malawi and the Eastern Part of Africa.

"Allow me to express my gratitude to the Catholic Church here in Malawi and in the region for its continued support towards the development of the country in areas of as health and education. I look forward to continued collaboration aimed at bettering the lives of our people," said Mutharika.

He therefore said the regional body of Episcopal conferences is not only crucial to the church but also to the governments where the member state comes from.

"I am convinced that that selection of the theme could not have come at any other time than this, when Africa is very much affected by some secularist agenda coming from other parts of the world, with so many other forces of evil," he said adding that "With the digital revolution and globalisation, Africa is not an isolated continent. As such we are also experiencing the forces that are negatively affecting the cultures of the people all over the world," he said.

In his remarks, the Chairman of AMECEA Archbishop Tarcisius Ziyaye who is also Archbishop for Lilongwe Archdiocese, said the country stands to benefit a lot from AMECEA plenary conference as it is the time when Christians are drawn closer to greater commitment towards God.

"Malawi is a God fearing nation and such gatherings give us time for reflections and prayers. Our discussions will mainly revolve around Evangelisation, Witness and Conversion which will benefit the people of Malawi," he said.

The Archbishop commended the government for its continued support towards the church which signifies for a successful AMECEA plenary.

During his homily, His Eminence John Cardinal Njue, Patron of AMECEA who presided over the opening Mass, asked the Catholic Faithful in the country and the AMECEA Region to prioritize Prayers in their families saying, that was the only way that can bring peace and unity in Africa.

"As Christians, let us value prayer and the sacrament of Eucharist because if we put prayer at the centre of everything, nothing will go wrong in our lives," he said.

During the mass, Archbishop Ziyaye received a Pallium from Rome which symbolises the Authority given to him as the Metropolitan of Lilongwe and the Unity with the successor of Peter

The theme for this year's 18th plenary session which is being hosted by Malawi, is "New Evangelisation through True conversion and witnessing to Christian Faith,"

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