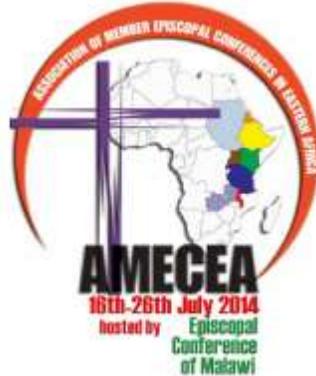


**Communiqué of the 18<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Lilongwe, Malawi  
(16<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2014)**



*“The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus”  
(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 1)*

The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), comprising of the Episcopal Conferences of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan/South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and the affiliate members of Djibouti and Somalia met for their regular triennial Plenary Assembly from 16<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> July 2014 under the theme: ***“New Evangelization through True Conversion and Witnessing to Christian Faith”***.

### **Preamble**

To the family of God in AMECEA region and all people of good will.

We, the Catholic Bishops in the AMECEA region, together with our Patrons, their Eminences the Cardinals, greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**APPRECIATING** the spirit of New Evangelization with prayerful thanksgiving to the spiritual guidance of the Holy Father, Pope Francis,

**ENCOURAGED** by the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio to Malawi and Zambia, His Excellency Julio Murat, during the opening ceremony of the 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly which signified our communion and solidarity with the Holy Father Pope Francis for which we are grateful,

**INSPIRED** by the deep insight of the AMECEA founding fathers both living and deceased, we are determined and inspired to forge ahead with confidence and solidarity in our mission of evangelization.

### **1. A Word of Gratitude**

As Catholic Bishops in the AMECEA region, we express our sincere appreciation to the people of Malawi, the warm heart of Africa. We acknowledge with deep gratitude their hospitality and in particular the welcome extended to us by His Excellency Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika, the President of the Republic of Malawi, who graced the opening ceremony of the Plenary Assembly.

We appreciate the support of the Government of Malawi, the security agents and other civic organs who contributed to the success of our Plenary Assembly.

We thank the outgoing Chairman, His Grace Archbishop Tarcisio Ziyaye, the outgoing members of the Executive Board, our AMECEA Secretariat, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) and its Secretariat, the organizing committee, clergy, religious and the lay faithful in Malawi and our partners. Your presence, contributions and active participation added substance and colour to the event. May Almighty God reward you all.

## **2. Solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Region**

We are saddened by the ongoing conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia and other parts of the world. We deplore the suffering of the people in these countries. We strongly advocate for a peaceful resolution to these conflicts and remain committed as Catholic Bishops in AMECEA region to do whatever is within our ability to bring about lasting peace to these Countries.

We ask our Catholic faithful and people of good will to remember Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia in their prayers and to attend with a helping hand to their urgent needs. We appeal to all peoples in these countries to embrace peace, seek reconciliation and work towards nation building.

## **3. The Family as the Nucleus of Life**

The threat to the family in our region is now more real than ever before. The crisis of marriage and the family has been increased by individualism in the contemporary society, breakdown of morals, attacks on the family unit, poverty and unemployment. As a Church in the region, we will endeavour to protect the family which is the domestic Church against all these dangers. We commit ourselves to pastoral care of broken families and all those who are going through difficulties in their families. We also condemn all forms of domestic violence.

We affirm institution of marriage as an indissoluble union of love between a man and a woman open to procreation and denounce any attempt to redefine this institution. Family life must be respected, promoted and protected so that it can provide men and women who can weave a social fabric of peace and harmony. We strongly condemn same sex unions and other deviations that go against human nature and natural law.

We urge for the protection and defence of the family at all costs as that is the beginning and pillar of human life and society. We seek to enable the family to be an instrument of New Evangelisation which is truly African and truly Christian.

We welcome and await the fruits of the forth coming extra ordinary synods on marriage and family life.

## **4. New Evangelization to Address New Challenges**

During our ten days in Lilongwe, we have reflected on the new challenges and realities facing the Church in its mission of evangelization. We have taken the opportunity to read and interpret the signs of the times. We commit ourselves to make use of the strategies of the Missionaries who took a positive view of African cultures and in them sought to find the concepts, terms and ways of expressing the Christ-event and the Christian life.

We acknowledge with appreciation the efforts many agents of evangelization who are committed to the spread of the Gospel in different ways. We encourage them to remain faithful to the mission we have received from our Lord Jesus Christ.

We endeavour to deepen Evangelization and employ various methodologies to ensure true catechesis, true conversion, true spirituality and true witness to Christian faith in AMECEA region and beyond.

We encourage all Catholics to participate actively in Small Christian Communities. As shepherds we commit ourselves to ensuring that Small Christian Communities continue being places for true experience of faith.

## **5. The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Media for Evangelization**

In the AMECEA region, we will continue to empower our social communication departments in order for the Church to fully embrace new forms of media as modern ways of propagating the Gospel. We urge pastoral agents to make responsibly use of media and contribute to the content. Furthermore we caution all people against misuse of social media.

## **6. Children and Youth**

Children and youth are a gift to and hope of the Church and society. Indeed children and youth form the greatest percentage of the population in Africa.

We urge parents and all those who are responsible for our Children to teach them the ways of God. Let us protect these precious gifts that we receive from God from the current abuses.

We urge all our youth in the AMECEA region to be credible witnesses of faith in homes, parishes, schools and work places. In addition we exhort the youth to be instruments of peace and avoid being used in propagating conflicts and violence. Cognizant of the plight many young people in the AMECEA region are going through, we appeal to the governments and other stakeholders to invest in education of young people, creation of jobs and opportunities to help them live a more dignified life.

On our part we undertake to invest in ongoing formation and journey with children and young people as they go through life.

## **7. Chaplaincy and Catholic Presence in Institutions of Learning**

Catholic Institutions of learning are optimal places of Christ meeting His people of all races and religions. The Catholic Church, since its inception, has valued learning and established institutions to promote learning of people at all levels. Through education, the Catholic Church has been able to evangelize and participate in developing responsible members of society.

As Bishops of the AMECEA region, together with other pastoral agents, it is our intention to provide moral and spiritual guidance to students and staff in institutions of learning and appoint more chaplains to serve in these institutions of learning. The presence of chaplains in schools and institutions should be visible and go beyond the occasional celebration of Holy Mass.

We ask the Chaplains and all those who accompany youth at every level to live exemplary lives and be an inspiration to the young generation in order to spread the Good News of Salvation and produce responsible citizens who are truly inspired by Gospel Values and the Catholic Social teachings.

## **8. Catholic Professionals**

As Shepherds, we have taken note of the need to accompany our professionals through on-going faith formation so that their faith can continue to be demonstrated even when they ascend to important administrative, civic and political offices. Our Catholic professionals should be men and women of faith who are socially and politically relevant to the African continent.

We invite all catholic professionals to play an active role in the work of evangelization.

## **9. Seminaries and Houses of Formation**

We acknowledge that seminaries and other houses of formation are very vital for enhancing New Evangelization. We commit ourselves to take formation of agents of

evangelization as a priority. We urge all those involved in formation to provide relevant training that will respond to the demands and challenges of the times.

We also commit ourselves to ensuring that seminaries and other houses of formation get exemplary formators who will be true models and a source of inspiration to those under formation.

#### **10. Terrorism and Violence**

While countries in the AMECEA region and beyond can claim to enjoy relative peace, the recurrent acts of violence and terrorism are very disturbing. We appeal to governments in the region to work hard to address the root causes of these problems and ensure protection of the lives of people and their properties. We further appeal for concerted regional and global efforts towards solving these problems.

We appeal to all people to work for peace.

#### **11. Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Conscience and Respect of Human Rights**

We strongly affirm that all human rights should always be respected and guaranteed in every society. This is the basis of lasting peace and harmony.

We therefore appreciate the efforts of our governments in the region in guaranteeing freedom of worship.

We condemn all forms of violence coming from religious fundamentalism, radicalism and fanaticism and implore all religious leaders to pursue the path of mutual respect and dialogue.

#### **12. Happenings Across the World during our Plenary Celebrations**

During the period of our Plenary Assembly, we have heard of the loss of lives in the Malaysian Plane crash, loss of lives in Palestine and Syria, and different kinds of sufferings in many parts of the world. We pray for all those who lost their lives and express our solidarity with the countries affected.

#### **Conclusion**

We are thanking God, the Almighty, for bringing us together to share and experience the priestly communion that Jesus Christ prayed for, *"That they may be one" (Jn 17:21)*. As your Shepherds, we assure you of our prayers and reiterate the words of St. Paul to the Philippians, *"I constantly pray with you in every one of my prayers for all of you ... because I hold you in my heart" (Phil 1:4, 7)*. We entrust you to the intercession and maternal care of our Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Our Lady of Africa.

Signed:

Most Rev. Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, CM  
**CHAIRMAN**

Date: 26 July 2014, Lilongwe, Malawi.