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Faith Doing Justice

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Dear friends and collaborators,

We continue to face serious challenges in Uganda and they are on the increase: violence, and **riots (10th -12th Sept)**. The immediate trigger of the riots was the stand of the Government preventing the King from visiting his territory in Kayunga.

Some **root causes**: widespread corruption, 83% unemployment , misuse of resources, poverty affecting more than 35% of the population, weak institutions, insufficient participation of civil society, unmet basic needs, political and religious intolerance. **Effects**: 24 people lost their lives, 550 remain arrested and some are facing death penalty, many people were injured, and much property destroyed etc.

In his last encyclical : **Charity in Truth**, Benedict XVI writes that there is a way of Salvation for our world if we want to work together for justice and peace, in dialogue and mutual respect. Are we: leaders and civic society ready and able to be just and to promote justice and human dignity.? The Pope reminds us that the new name for Human Dignity is “ *Integral Human Development*”!

I. EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

1. NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR SUTAINABLE RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

On the 10th -12th Sept. Religious leaders (The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda= IRCU), with Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga as the main convener, gathered at a national Forum to devise ways of building a more reconciled, healed and prosperous Uganda. The theme: “A Search for Sustainable National Reconciliation, Justice and Peace at all levels.”

On the first day, Religious leaders presented the challenges regarding RJP. The sub-theme: **Religious Leaders are called upon by God to play teaching and prophetic roles among the people of Uganda.**

Dr. Alex Nkabahona from MUK, presented the keynote address on the theme: **Walking the path to Sustainable Peace and Prosperity through Reconciliation and Healing**, in three transitions:

First: **from senseless wars and violent conflicts to sustainable peace.**

Second: **participatory and multiparty democracy. 2011 Elections will be the test.!**

Third : **transition on the economic well being front through economic empowerment and improved standards of living.**

It was agreed to make this Forum for dialogue and promotion of RJP an annual and national event. While the conference was taking place, the bullets and smoke of the riots in Kampala were seen and heard everywhere. The participants could not travel back home until very late that night.!

Second day, the cultural leaders joined the religious leaders to analyze together the dramatic and critical situation and search for the best way forward.

The sub-theme: **Cultural Leaders are called upon by God to be symbols of unity, to utilize to the maximum God’s gift –the Spirit of Discernment.**

As the riots and violence continued in several towns and Kampala in particular, the conference took three immediate steps:

1. To pray together for the situation;
2. To invite both the President of Uganda and the King of Buganda for a briefing on the situation. This encounter happened and it diffused the tension and prevented more bloodshed!
3. Had they not been able to come, two delegations would have been sent from among the participants to meet the leaders. There was also a proposal to walk together through the city to the Parliament appealing for calm and dialogue!.

On the third day, the national political leaders, including the President of Uganda joined the conference.

The sub-theme: **The Arms of the Government and Political Leaders are called upon by God to lead all the citizens of Uganda to uphold the Ugandan Motto: “ For God and my County”**, and to implement together with the citizens the two African Charters:

1. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (The Banjul charter 1986), and 2. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation. (Arusha 1990).

The President spoke on "the legitimate interests" of the people: security, jobs, education, market etc. Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga reminded the President that Faith and Religious freedom are also legitimate rights.

Expected Outcomes of the Conference:

- To make public in the media a **Communiqué**. (www.jp2jpc.org)
- A permanent Forum at national level for interaction amongst different stakeholders on governance, peace, reconciliation and development issues and experiences in Uganda.
- A frame-work for engagement between government, civil society and faith-based actors on matters of governance, peace, reconciliation and development in Uganda.
- Commitment by Government to expeditiously enact the necessary legal framework for the promotion of national reconciliation in Uganda.
- Commitment by all stakeholders to promote good governance, prosperity, equity and co-existence among the different political, ethnic and religious groups in Uganda.

2. HUMAN SACRIFICES

Uganda has been shocked by a surge in ritualized murders and human sacrifices. According to Monitor Newspaper (19 Sept.09): " In 2008 more than 300 cases of murder and disappearances linked to ritual ceremonies were reported to the police. There were also several high-profile arrests of parents and relatives accused of selling children for human sacrifices, to guarantee wealth and prosperity".

Wealthy elite is taking advantage of the desperate poor, for example the high profile trial of a business man accused of sacrificing a 12 year old boy to guarantee the success of anew venture. The spate of murders and rising number of children disappearing is generating panic across the Country. " In the last three months, over 40 children have either gone missing or have been killed". (Monitor: 9th Sept. 2009) The New Vision Newspaper (23rd Sept.09) stresses that leaders must focus on preventing child sacrifices. "In the first quarter of 2009, 18 cases of child sacrifice were reported to the police". In the Monitor (27th Sept.09) we read: "The fate of 293 people, reported to have disappeared between January and August this year remains unknown. According to the Anti-Human Sacrifice and Trafficking Taskforce, in the past eight months, a total of 841 disappearances were reported to police and 448 people have already been traced."

The Government is expected to table a paper in Parliament on the steps taken to address this problem. Parents, children minders, community leaders, schools , even children can play a vital role in stemming child sacrifice.

3. LAUNCHING OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN THE TEN SLUMS OF KAMPALA

The findings of the research carried out by JPIIJPC in ten slums of Kampala was first of all shared with the slum dwellers themselves. The aim was to see what they can do with the findings by themselves to improve their own situation. If better informed and organized, they can claim from their local leaders and civil servants greater transparency, accountability and better services.

The findings are published in the booklet: “**The Plight of the Urban Poor and yet Increased Rural Urban Migration**”.

4. JPIC EAST AFRICA REPRESENTATIVES WORKSHOP

From August 2nd-16th : 42 religious working for JPIC coming from East Africa, gathered, at St. Augustine’s Institute seeking to network better and so to be more efficient in the work of promoting JPIC. This Forum was launched by the JPIC Commission of the Major Superiors Union in Rome (USG/UISG) in collaboration with JPIIJPC. The main themes presented were: **Peace Building and Conflict Resolution, Inter-Religious Dialogue, Gender and Human Rights, Catholic Social Teaching and the Experience of Networking in JPIIJPC**. Similar networking forums were launched in Kinshasa, Accra, Bamako and one is planned for South Africa. Only together we can have a meaningful impact in promoting JPIC.

5. JPIC SESSIONS IN NEBBI DIOCESE

From August: 31st - 6th Sept.09, JPIIJPC carried out three JPIC sessions of two days each, in three parishes of Nebbi diocese. These were: Warr, Zumbo and Nyapea. Over 60 couples attended each of the three sessions. The aim is to build the capacity of parents to be better witnesses and ethics educators for their children.

6. TWO PUBLICATIONS

Together with the research findings, JPIIJPC has also published a second booklet: “**The relevance of the African Synod to Uganda**”. Both are available at the centre, in some catholic parishes and at St. Paul’s bookshop. They cost: 3000 sh. each.

7. WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG LEADERS IN JINJA

July 28th –August 16th : 55 youth gathered in Jinja for a workshop on the theme: “**Building Peace for the future through the Ugandan Youth**”

8. WORKSHOPS WITH THE COMBONI SISTERS

JPIIJPC was invited to facilitate three provincial gatherings of the Comboni Sisters. Theme: “**Economic Justice and Consecrated Life today.**”

Lessons learnt:

- keeping informed on current events;
- justice starts with us in dealing with community challenges, like: means for the apostolate, solidarity fund, relations with employees etc.
- promoting JPIC is an integral part of Evangelization.

II. ATTENDING MEETINGS AND NETWORKING

1. WORKSHOP IN SIERRA LEONE

From Aug. 30th –Sept. 6th: 40 JP Commissions and the German Association for Development Cooperation representatives together with local partners from countries which have experienced war recently, gathered in Freetown, Sierra Leone to reflect on the theme: “**Memory, Truth, Love: Dealing with the burden of the past**” and to learn from past experiences.

The participants met different groups of victims: amputees, prisoners, ex-combatants etc. to see how they are living with the past. While a lot has been done to bring healing and reconciliation, through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the root causes of the war: corruption, unemployment, abuse of power etc. are still prevailing ! Many fear that violence could erupt again! See the **Communiqué** on our website: www.jp2jpc.org

Lessons learnt:

- resilience of victims to innovate a future,
- need to address the root cause of war and violence,
- need of political will to work for the common good.

2. NETWORKING WITH UGANDA JOINT CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (UJCC)

JPIIIPC is seeking to work with UJCC and other partners to prepare the electorate for the 2011 general Elections and to prepare a booklet for that purpose. This is also in view of empowering civil society to be more responsible in promoting RJP and in claiming accountability and transparency from the leaders. Our concern reaches the next Elections and beyond !.

3. WORKSHOP ON LAND GRABBING

TROCAIRE and other partners, including JPIIIPC are engaged in collecting DATA on land issues in view of setting a national Data-base regarding land injustices. Having the facts would enable us to advocate for more just policies and for the implementation of those laws.

III. UPCOMING EVENTS

1. WORKSHOP WITH TEACHERS

JPIIIPC is preparing a working plan to meet 20 teachers from five schools in each of the 19 dioceses of Uganda to build their capacity as ethics/civic educators. The first will take place in Hoima town on 9-10th Oct.09

2. PARENTS OUTREACH PROGRAM

A detailed work plan to meet about 7-10 couples from each parish gathered at deanery-town venues of the whole Northern and North Eastern regions, plus Kampala Archdiocese is being prepared. The Aim is: to build the ethics/civic education capacity of selected couples so that they become trainers of others in their own parishes.

3. OPEN LECTURES ON CST IN HIGHER LERNING INSTITUTIONS

Ggaba National Seminary has invited JPIIIPC to hold monthly open lectures on different themes of CST presented from the community or grass roots perspective. The next one will take place on Friday 16th Oct. 09, from 6 pm to 7,30 pm.

The centre plans to continue supporting the KIU peace group and similar Peace clubs in other learning institutions and formation houses. The objective is to empower the youth to become Peace makers.

4. A SECOND MAJOR RESEARCH ON FOOD INSECURITY

As planed , a second major research is being organized in the last quarter of 2009 on the issue of food insecurity. This is becoming a critical issue in Uganda and in many other countries of Africa and the world due to climate change.

5. GENERAL LAUCHING OF KBNB

After the launching of the findings at grass roots level, the centre is planning to hold the general launching of the findings in the city centre, jointly with the Government Ministry of lands, housing and urban development and the Kampala city Council. It is being planed for Oct.09.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. CALENDAR 2010

The 2010 Calendar of JPIIJC is available at the centre, at St. Paul's Bookshop and in some catholic Parishes of Kampala. Captions from CST on every page are captivating! It sells at 2.000 sh. Don't miss it !

2. HUMAN DIGNITY BOOK

The first booklet on one of the major themes of CST, namely: Human Dignity, will be published by Nov. 2009 . This publication is meant for parents, catechists and educators and could easily be translated in different local languages