

Appeal of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) to Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)

Rumbek, South Sudan 8th-15th November 2010

Your Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, President of SECAM

Your Grace Archbishop Tarcisio Ziyaye, Chairman of AMECEA

We, the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference gathered for our Plenary Assembly in Rumbek from the 8th-15th November 2010, express our most heartfelt gratitude to the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences (SECAM) for your pastoral solidarity visit to the Church and the people of Sudan.

The special focus of this esteemed visit is forthcoming referendum in which the people of Southern Sudan and the transitional territory of Abyei will exercise their right of self-determination as stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) on the 9th January 2005.

In the spirit of solidarity which has been expressed by our brothers in Episcopate from SECAM and AMECEA, we further request you to lobby and advocate for the just cause of the people of Southern Sudan as expressed in the CPA. When the CPA was signed in Nairobi, Kenya amid great hopes in 2005, a key element was that the unity of Sudan should be given a chance and made attractive to the people of Southern Sudan by addressing the root causes of conflict.

These root causes are:

1. The failure to achieve a national identity and the unity of Sudan that guarantees and protects the fundamental rights of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of the Sudan.
2. The highly centralized system of government controlled by small ethnic group which has imposed its system of administration on the whole country through islamization of the laws, institutions and political systems.

All indications are that national unity has not been made attractive to the people of Southern Sudan. At the same time, the root-causes of the conflicts have not been addressed. The leadership of Sudan and the political establishment bear a great responsibility for this tragic situation. A unity which binds and oppresses, prohibits all forms of opposition, a unity which imposes uniformity and condemns those who differ in faith and culture must be rejected.

After five years of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and in accordance with the Interim National Constitution and the Southern Sudan Referendum Act 2009 and the people of Southern Sudan have reached the time to exercise the right to self-determination through an internationally monitored referendum scheduled to take place on 9th January 2011.

We note with concern that parts of the CPA have not been respected or implemented, and have been characterised by political manipulation, including delays to the general elections, the promulgation of Southern Sudan Referendum Act, establishment of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, border demarcation and other provisions. It should be noted that there is a moral imperative over and above legal technicalities and political compromises. The

recognition of the right of self determination must be the guiding principle in response to the cry of the people of Southern Sudan, Abyei and transitional areas of the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile for justice, respect of human rights and dignity. The above scenario leave us with fear that the government of National Unity lacks the required good will to see the successful completion of this decisive processes.

The people of the Nuba Mountains (in Southern Kordofan State) and the people of Blue Nile State do not have their rights of self determination, despite the fact that many feel culturally and ethnically connected to the south and fought alongside southerners in the liberation struggle. The people of Abyei also have a referendum to choose to remain in Southern Kordofan or to become part of Warrap State in Greater Bahr el Ghazal. Until now the Abyei Referendum Commission has not been formed amid disputes. The failure to offer the people of these areas the chance to determine their own future could lead to instability and violence which could soon draw in the rest of the country and spread to another full scale civil war in the Sudan. This would inevitably have devastating effects to the neighbouring countries and the region including, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, DRC Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Egypt and beyond. The spread of conflicts to other countries cannot be better demonstrated than in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) who are terrorizing communities in Southern Sudan, DRC Congo and CAR.

In view of the foregoing, we appeal to SECAM and AMECEA to lobby their respective Conferences and Governments on the following areas:-

1. That the referenda takes place on schedule and should be free, fair and transparent
2. That their governments respect the choice of the people of Southern Sudan and Transitional Areas
3. That the minorities in both Northern and Southern Sudan be recognized and protected in accordance to the international provisions of law
4. We are seeking for facilitation support from SECAM and AMECEA to the SCBC in the post referenda era
5. Call on those supporting the LRA to stop arming them, and to encourage a return to the negotiating table
6. Finally we ask you to join us in our daily prayers for the peaceful process of the referenda and the beginning of a better life.

On our part we welcome your kind gesture and solidarity on two areas:

1. We shall work and reflect on the kind proposals made to our Conference by CUEA through AMECEA as well as SECAM, and come out with a program of implementation in support of capacity building for personnel for our Church institutions and structures.
2. We welcome with gratitude the readiness by SECAM and AMECEA to join the monitoring team during the referenda. We call on Church in Africa to assist in monitoring the referendum process.

We sincerely thank SECAM and AMECEA for this great gesture of love that has encouraged us in our faith and hope. We count on God's blessings and protection who has given us the gift of Church as a family of God. We entrust ourselves in this process to the hands of Mary the Mother of God, the Queen of Peace and of Africa!

Signed in Rumbek, 10th November 2010