



## « Organising the service of charity in Africa: the role of the Bishops »

Dakar, 18 - 20 September 2017

### FINAL DECLARATION

#### OUR MEETING

1. We Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Presidents of Episcopal Conferences and National Caritas from 43 countries of the Caritas Internationalis Africa Region, thank God for having gathered us in Dakar from 18 to 20 September 2017 on the theme "**Organizing the Service of Charity in Africa: the role of the Bishops**". This meeting took place five years after the one in Kinshasa in November 2012 on the "**Identity and the mission of Caritas in the light of the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est**", sanctioned by a strong final declaration, insisting on the ecclesial nature of Caritas and its specific mission to the light of the Gospel and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church.
2. We reaffirm the content of this declaration and invite those who engage in the Church's pastoral social action to continue to act and act as credible witnesses of Christ (*Act 1, 8*).
3. We express our gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope Francis for the message addressed to us through H.E. Archbishop Michael W. BANACH, the Apostolic Nuncio in Senegal; this message is a sign of Pope Francis paternal solicitude towards our Churches.
4. We thank the Church Family of God in Senegal for welcoming us and for its hospitality.
5. Our gratitude and appreciation, with the assurance of our prayers, go to His Excellency Macky SALL, President of the Republic of Senegal

and to his Government for the exceptional facilities provided for us to hold our meeting.

6. We have had the joy of rereading the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, as well as the *Motu Proprio Intima Ecclesiae Natura* and *Humanam Progressionem*, and to understand more fully how much the charity service is central to the mission of the Church as a community of faith and love (*Jn 4, 7-11*).
7. The presence of His Eminence Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah TURKSON, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio TAGLE, President of Caritas Internationalis, has been an encouragement to us and their interventions, inspiration in our responsibility as fathers of charity in our particular Churches. We welcome the creation of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and encourage the start of its structuring and its approaches that we will take into account in our pastoral mission and organization.

## **OUR FAITH**

8. We share the faith of all those who, in the small cells of the Christian life in parishes and local communities, to the more global structures contribute to the effectiveness of charity and the presence of the Church and of Christ in the world. The enriching positive experiences shared during this gathering give the image of a Church on the move, resolutely committed to the service of every person and humanity as a whole (*Populorum Progressio, 14*) despite many challenges and which call for more and more imagination and creativity in our pastoral mission.
9. We take the thought of Pope Francis on the plane that brought him back from Colombia, on 10 September 2017, according to which Africa is not a land to be exploited but a friend to love, to help to grow. We are grateful to the organizations of the sister churches that accompany us and reiterate our willingness to walk with them in Christian hope, fraternal communion, support and mutual reinforcement without substituting ourselves for the service of the most disadvantaged who are our brothers and sisters, letting us evangelize them.
10. Our limited means of action must not be an excuse for a wait-and-see attitude, for the development of the poor can only be achieved by the poor themselves. That is why we strongly encourage South-South

as well as North-South exchanges within our Churches, the capitalization of experiences and pooling of expertise and resources, harmonization at all levels of the guidelines that guide our collective commitment.

11. Our hearts are bleeding to see that the misery of our people is often caused by some of our own leaders, in collaboration with foreign powers, while these very ones are supposed to fight poverty and stem it out. In the end, they force us to act as extinguishers of the hotbeds of tension which they light and feed, thus pushing our young people into exile or turning them into militants of political or religious extremism.

## **OUR COMMITMENT**

12. We implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to be in our churches the first craftsmen and the good guardians of the service of charity (*Mt 24, 45; Tt 1, 7*).

13. Hence we commit ourselves to:

- 1) stand on the side of the communities and individuals, whose God given resources and means of livelihood, including their land, are under threat of exploitation by both internal and external interests;
- 2) pay more attention to migration and refugee problems, to the consequences of political crises and natural disasters and, where appropriate, to work proactively upstream in order to better contribute to the eradication of the causes of poverty on a continent that is rich in its populations, especially its young people, its cultures and its natural resources;
- 3) involve ourselves in the preparation and participation in the next synod of the young people who are the wealth of the Church and of the nation and to do everything possible to make them feel at home in the Church;
- 4) create with our partners opportunities for these young people to contribute to their integral formation and to their Christian and citizenship growth;
- 5) strengthen the participation of women and make visible their contribution to the development of our families and communities;
- 6) encourage responsible leaders and elites who serve the common good and constantly denounce those who are corrupt and who maintain the

impoverishment of the masses as a strategy for the maintenance or conquest of power;

- 7) progressively adapt our socio-pastoral structures to those of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, according to the contexts of our particular Churches;
- 8) contribute to the improvement of governance in our socio-charitable works, by adopting appropriate constitutive texts and by appointing competent and appropriate persons;
- 9) integrate into the religious and priestly formation the systems of the social teaching of the Church and the minima of the principles of transparent management of the property of the Church belonging to the poor;
- 10) develop a genuine synergy of action at the level of the continent, sub-regions (zones), Episcopal Conferences and dioceses with a view to productive ecclesial communion in the service of integral human promotion;
- 11) strengthen fraternal solidarity with Sister Churches, interfaith collaboration and cooperation with civil society organizations for peace building and development in our regions, while respecting our Catholic identity and avoiding us to be guided by contemporary ideologies.

May the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa, intercede for us.

Dakar, 20 September 2017