

V PAN AFRICAN ASSEMBLY OF CARITAS AFRICA REGION

PREAMBLE : We, the delegates of Caritas Africa Region, meeting in Kigali-Rwanda, at the St Paul Pastoral Centre from September 29 to October 04th 2002 at our 5th Pan African Assembly, in response to the call of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, have deliberated on the topic : Globalisation of Solidarity ; “Africa, you have received like the others ; what are you offering to the World” ?

The addresses presented on the topic and the workshops that followed have permitted us to examine together ways and means to increase our contribution to building a more just and more solidarity-centred world, at this time when the number of those excluded from the benefits of globalisation is constantly on the increase, and when the principles of the Gospel and of the social teaching of the Church which stress preferential option for the poor, the dignity of the human being, and his / her right to the good (of this earth) are being more and more neglected.

To this effect, we have found it necessary to re-emphasize our ecclesial and Christian identity, and we have pledged to work towards consolidating the autonomy of our Churches (in Africa) and of our Caritas(es) which are the tools of (the Church’s) socio-pastoral work. Furthermore, we have decided to organise better our efforts of solidarity with / in favour of/on behalf of those excluded and those deprived in our parishes, our dioceses, our zones (sub-regions), in our region (Africa) as well as those of our confederation as a whole.

With due respect to the principle of subsidiarity and constantly integrating our efforts with our local Churches holistic / total (global) pastoral work, and under the leadership and with the involvement of our fathers, the Bishops ; convinced that a new world is possible, we are determined to stretch our imagination in our effort to enable the poor and the excluded to take their destinies in their our hands.

1. The Identity and spirituality of Caritas

a) *Who are we ?*

Caritas Africa as a whole is one of the components of the Church’s holistic pastoral work. We are an integral part of the Church and our work is inspired by our faith in Jesus Christ. We see in the face of each of the beneficiaries of our work / efforts the face of the Lord. “*Caritas Christi urgetnos.*” We are indeed something more than an NGO. We share in the essential worries and anxieties of other civil society organizations. However, before all that/over and above all that, we are agents of the socio-pastoral work of a Church that is “a Community of Love”. In Africa, the reference of Caritas to the Gospel and to the Social teaching of the Church, her / its (Caritas) link to the Church as-a family of God and its attachment to the traditional values of solidarity are unequivocal.

b) *Challenges to our identity*

These Challenges derive from / concern our way and manner of being Church and being in the Church. It is necessary to become the image of a Church which is truly at the service of the poor, a Church which is not content with only preaching the Good news, but one whose credibility depends / issues from being good news herself. We call attention to the following challenges.

- The lack of integration of Caritas or weak integration (of it) in the holistic pastoral work of our local Churches.

- Lack of involvement or a rather weak involvement of the leadership of our local Churches in the work of our Caritas(es) which leads to the limited results of mobilisation in our communities by the said Caritas(es)
- The persistence of a dependency mentality among those responsible as well as those beneficiary of the work of Caritas.
- The inadequate formation, or event the lack of formation, of the agents of Caritas in the Social context with regards to the matters of advocacy for change on the local level, and (with regards) to matters of social justice for all.

c) Among the actions to be undertaken are:

- Intensify the work of animation on all levels in order to :
 - ensure the integration of the work of Caritas in the holistic pastoral efforts of the Church in Africa,
 - strengthen the personal involvement of all Christians in the work of Caritas as authentic expression of their faith,
 - develop in the pastoral agents workers (of the Church) a sense of complementarity and solidarity, in order to appreciate / value each other's function in the mission / work of Charity,
 - emphasize the participation and involvement of all the members of the community, especially the Bishops in the (strategic and tactical) planning of the work of our Caritas(es),
 - give importance to the role and place of women in the work of our Caritas(es).

2. The Autonomy of Caritas Africa.

By autonomy of the Caritas(es) in Africa, we mean / refer to their right to fix objectives, to determine and mobilize the means to attain them, and to be fully responsible and accountable to all sectors of our activities.

Autonomy in Caritas Africa evokes means self-reliance as well as collaboration, because “just as the (human) body which is a unity although it has many parts-all parts of the body, though many still making up one single body-so it is with Christ. “(1Gn 12.12). The autonomy of our (Caritas(es) means self-determination by these Caritas(es), the capacity / right to make choices and approve them, to elaborate plans and put them into operation, application, action, to choose partners and to negotiate the conditions / terms thereof. Autonomy also means the inalienable right to put together the necessary structures for action / implementation.

Autonomy, as understood in this sense, is the only remedy against dependence (that continues to make children of us, and continues to afflict some of our structures.

The causes of our dependence are, among others, due / linked to our colonial history (even some times to the history of evangelisation) of our countries and of our Churches, to bad governance and corruption among our elite, some of whom are Christians, due to the excessive poverty of the immense majority of the populations in our region, to climatic and environmental uncertainties / degradation, due to the attitudes of some of our partners and to their insufficient knowledge of and insensitivity to our socio-cultural and religious context, due to _____ and to the search for easy life, due to a certain lack of professionalism more often because of inadequate necessary means for the employment / recruitment of qualified personnel.

The lack of autonomy or the weak autonomy of our Caritas(es) and the causes which explain this present state of affairs constitute challenges which need to be looked at.

Actions to be undertaken :

- Increase the professional expertise of our structures and strengthen our capacities by using and improving upon the numerous human resources that abound in our countries and our local Churches.
- Encourage activities that generate revenues for the benefit of the most deprived.
- Give security to permanent employees of Caritas and put in place ways and means of offering the said employees career motivation.
- Focus on actions that aim at increasing the sense of responsibility, the formation, the organisation, the capacity for analysis and preparedness of the local communities, so that they are not only satisfied with responding to emergencies, but will participate in those structures aimed at reducing the negative effects of poverty.
- Encourage visits to and exchanges of successful experiences as part of the growth to autonomy.

3. Solidarity among ourselves and with others

“**Caritas is a family of solidarity**”. This consists in sharing what we are, what we have and how to bear each other’s **burdens**. To live together in solidarity is for us a way to respond to the **invitation of Christ** when He says “love one another as I have loved you “(Jn13, 34). We are convinced that Caritas has an important role to play in civil society by arousing the active participation of our local communities so that they can develop all their potential. We are committed to contribute in bringing about a new world, a world where justice and peace reign and where the dignity of each and every person as a member of the family of God is respected.

Actions to be undertaken

- To intensify animation in order to ensure that our local churches appropriate the Ideal and activities of Caritas and make them their own.
- To strengthen the role of the national, zonal and regional coordination by organising first of all mutual sharing of information and then by seeking synergies.
- To undertake serious discussion with our partners regarding their parallel offices and not to encourage these offices whose presence is a threat to the future of our own structures.
- To render operational our own mechanism to respond to emergencies and to own those set up by CI.
- To enrich our data bank on competences found in the basic communities and in our structures of Caritas.
- To spread all over the organisation of a day of Caritas in each and everyone of our countries and our dioceses.
- To intensify training in the techniques of fund raising beginning right from the local communities.
- To continue the experience of operational partnership with other organisations of cooperation in development, with those of the United Nations System and to be open to those partners in the world who have the same values and **Ideals** as ourselves.
- To start a fund for emergencies at the level of the Regional Secretariat of Caritas of Africa.
- To make use of modern means of communication in an efficient way and especially to develop our regional web site.
- To revive our traditional mechanisms of a solidarity as well.

In view of the elaboration of the CI plan of action for 2003-2007, we are proposing the following :

FORUM

To contribute more actively in the strengthening of the General Secretariat of CI and the Regional Secretariat in the efforts of the member organisations of the confederation. To see to it that Caritas becomes visible by assuring our presence in the different world forums.

STRENGTHENING OF CAPACITIES

To fight against the **marginalisation** of the African competences and expertise in the operations of CI. To support the structures of national or zonal coordinations, including financially if necessary.

To recruit and remunerate fairly African staff involved in the operations of CI.

ADVOCACY

To organise workshops on advocacy. In the act of advocacy to give priority to themes proposed by the Region of Africa and to reserve for Africa the attention she merits in the work of advocacy.

Among the themes for advocacy there should be: the mining **industries**, fair trade, Arms trade, AIDS etc.

To Identify those coalitions that can help us to make our voice reach far. To study the ways and means of having access to these media that shape public opinion.

To facilitate the cooperation.

To see to it that there is fairness in the responses to emergencies. In a way, Africa always remains the poor child in the mobilisation of funds for emergencies and the politics of “countries of greater attention” preached by certain Caritas of the North does not encourage the globalisation of solidarity.

CONCLUSION

“ It is time” Says John Paul II,” of a new imagination of charity (**Novo Millennio Ineute**) the testimonies of solidarity that we have heard during these sessions, particularly from Caritas Rwanda, a Caritas that has very remarkably recovered and taken up its position and role in the service of the church and of the Rwandan society, a Caritas that has provided solidarity even beyond the borders of Rwanda after having suffered the horrors of genocide in 1994, a genocide some of whose horrible consequences we saw during our visit to the memorial of **Murambi** ; the moments of prayer that we have shared, the several exchanges among us the impressive capacity of logistical organisation displayed in this Assembly, the conviviality and the spirit of communion that we have witnessed, the different financial contributions of the members of Caritas Africa for this Assembly to take place, all these have manifested the incredible spiritual and human potential of the Church and Caritas of our Region. We hereby commit ourselves to make solidarity, above all, among ourselves, a more living reality.

May God bless the Church in Africa in her mission of making charity shine.