

## **Meeting of Christian Church Leaders on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1997**

Venue : **Archevêché Catholique de Kinshasa**

With his Eminency Cardinal ETSOU Frédéric, Archbishop of Kinshasa

*"You will be my witnesses" Acts 1: 8*

Catholic, Kimbanguist Orthodox and Protestant churches in collaboration with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), have organized a conference of Christian churches of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The theme was :

**"THE PLACE AND ROLE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN THE DRC  
AND IN CENTRAL AFRICA : UNITY, PEACE AND HUMAN DIGNITY  
AS DIVINE REQUIREMENT FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT."**

We, leaders of Catholic, Kimbanguist, Orthodox and Protestant churches, have followed the job done by the conference of Christian Churches with anxiety and prayers. Indeed, from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1997 delegates from our respective churches met, discussed and exchanged ideas on an important theme which appeals to our common call.

In the light of the recommendations made, we can rejoice over this meeting. Reaffirming that Jesus Christ remains the universal model and the source of values of democracy through the attitude of service, the sense of pre-eminence of dignity for every human beings created in the image of God and through the sense of justice, responsibility and freedom. Therefore, our churches have the entire duty of telling the society that the Creator called upon every person to contribute, with a well done job, to the creative and liberating work of God.

The Christian attitude of unity always go with the will to accept each other, to learn from others' Christian experiences in order to aspire together to some kind of privileged testimony on our common mission, i.e., reveal Christ to the World and to be at the service of salvation and liberation of all.

Faithfulness to the Gospel teaches us the virtue of humility, that rids us of the belief that we are always right ; a state that prevents our thinking together and deafens us to others' ideas that could be for our common good. No doubt, the absence of a sense of belonging and togetherness strangles our ability to create a new order.

Initiation of a positive dialogue among all the citizens of the same country is a way of protection against any exclusion by ethnocentrism, by fear of the other, by selfishness and feelings of contempt for the other.

Being messengers of Jesus Christ in the World, and witnesses to his throne, we must strive to promote solidarity, justice and reconciliation among citizens of the same country, as required by God: a duty to one's neighbour.

Our effort to understand our neighbour and our duty to him, can only be rewarding if we trace the causes of division, prejudice and negative attitudes which prevents us from carrying out our divine duty of solidarity among the children of the universe, of the same Heavenly Father, bearing in mind our obligation to nurture the same values and share our suffering.

It is for this reason that as a church, we reassert our commitment to put the reconstruction of Congo (DR) and of Africa as a whole, under the light of God's plan for man and for all creation. We reassert that Christ invites us to self-abnegation in order to foster peace and solidarity without which the reconstruction would be an illusion. Before God's mercy, we recognize the fact that under the Congo Republic, we failed as Pastors and Christians.

Whenever we let the people suffer because of fear or some selfish interests of a few, we should ask for forgiveness from Christ and from the Heavenly Father. We commit ourselves to the promotion of political and human attitudes which will favour solidarity, social justice, peace and mutual understanding.

We assert our commitment to the development of the country through complementarity of responsibility to the people and through autonomy of duties of the Church and the Government.

As spiritual leaders, we increased the number of meetings as well as dialogues with the former political authorities, in order to highlight their responsibilities vis a vis the people of God. At the end of time, we will be judged by our deeds governed by the law of love.

Today, with the creation of the National Council of Churches (Conseil National des Eglises Chrétiennes) we would like to create room for concertation, dialogue and action in order to facilitate the pastoral work required by our common prophetic role. Let us not feel tired of carrying out our duty of promoting the sacred values of life.

We would like to rejoice over the creation of an active link of solidarity among the churches of Congo Democratic and those of Central Africa. We also encourage our commissions of Justice and Peace to carry out and follow up our recommendations in the field.

Thanks to the love of God, and to the help of his Salvation through Jesus Christ, we will be able to monitor and to fight any attitude leading to reappearance of fear, rejection of behaviour that would compromise our duties of national, African and international solidarity.

Brothers, sisters and well wishers, GOD HAS CERTAINLY ANSWERED the prayers of his people; let us not avoid our duty to carry out his hope to see Congo (DR) as a country where the rule of law prevails.

We would like to assure the new authorities of our country that the materialization of such a state will be possible with the contribution of all.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF TRE CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO HELD AT KINSHASA FROM 21<sup>ST</sup> TO 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 1997.**

Concerned about the fate of the people of Africa and of the Congo (DR), our country, resulting in many armed conflicts; After a critical analysis of national and international environment in its socio-political and economic context, the conference of the Christian churches has made the following recommendations:

### **1. TO CHURCHES THEMSELVES**

1. That we really follow the universal, one and only model: Jesus Christ
  - (a) By playing our prophetic role, we should denounce any act or thought, be it individual or collective which is contrary to the dignity of man as created in the image of God.
  - (b) By stimulating awareness through faith education and all its requirements in families, grassroots church organizations, parishes, biblical and theological centers.
  - (c) By teaching all households, grassroots communities human rights and social justice
2. Given the impact of modern communication, let us be committed to teaching people as well as communities to acquire critical judgement on pictures, ideas and behaviour containing messages and ideals which are contrary to the dignity of the person who was created in the image of God.
3. That we remain vigilant in finding seeking the historical truth of the genocide perpetrated in Rwanda, Burundi and the tragedy of refugees and displaced people in the Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo).
4. That we encourage all positive pastoral efforts made by the churches of Rwanda, Burundi and DRC (Congo) as far as reconciliation and pacific co-existence of people are concerned.
5. That we, church leaders, remain in touch as before in order to adopt common responses to different political and social situations in DRC and in Central Africa.

Also, we rejoice over the maturity of mind with which our meetings are organized. The creation of the Conseil National des Eglises Chrétiennes today officially opens the way to concertations, to exchange of ideas and to fraternal dialogues and actions.

In the same mood, we welcome and certify the official launch of La chaîne de solidarité Agissante and we encourage this body to carry out the execution and the follow up of our recommendations in the field particularly through popularization and creation of local sub-branches of our chain of solidarity. We encourage the christian community to materially support our churches; this is how we will be able to secure the christian freedom of our actions and decisions.

6. That through this channel of dialogue, our churches be continually strong to carry out their duty of calling upon all concerned parties to respect human life and all the creation.

## **II TO THE AUTHORITIES**

1. As the church of Christ, through our respective churches, we thank and pray for all those who contributed to the political change in our country, both within and without our national borders; we encourage them to continue their efforts to bring about democracy which is being established with the rule of law in our country.
2. The churches assure the government that they are willing to cooperate for the entire reconstruction of our country and of Central Africa, in the interest of our people.
3. As for the need for integration; national, regional and international solidarity, the churches caution on negative attitudes, i.e., attitudes that may bring about the reappearance of fear and feelings of rejection as well as the delay and compromising of national and African solidarity.
4. We recommend that the political authorities acquire the necessary wisdom to avoid exploitation of passion for political reasons that will divide and bring about hatred among children of the Divine family in Congo and Central Africa.
5. We recommend that lessons on human rights be initiated from nursery school to institutions of higher education.
6. We call the attention of the government to its responsibility to safeguard the national sovereignty and inhibiting the creativity of future generations by the right state institutions.

These requirements should be monitored by a parliament and by the right state institutions.

## **TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

1. The churches request the OAU and the UNO and all other international organizations to adopt positive attitudes which will allow the DRC to succeed in its change process according to the wish of its people.
2. We recommend that preference be given to all ways and means which will favour endogenous development through cooperation, rather than military and debt mechanisms which will impoverish our people.

Also, we find it indecent to claim debts from a country one owes and whose public loans were meant to support individuals and regimes in a way to harm the welfare of people as a common policy dealing with North-South relationships.

#### **IV. TO ALL**

1. The church calls upon every son and daughter of this country to be aware of their responsibility vis a vis solidarity peace, justice and protection of all creation.
2. We recommend every citizen to consider politics, public administration and the army as services meant to promote the welfare of the national community rather than an oppressive force. We invite everybody in DRC-as well as in Central Africa to shun selfishness in order to avoid division; the primary source of conflict, war and genocide.

We take this opportunity offered to us through this great meeting of Christian churches to express our pain over social and human tragedy undergone by many families of our brothers and sisters in Congo Brazzaville. We wish to hereby convey to them our message of Christian and African solidarity through organization of centers for refugees in DRC, prayers and mediation.

We remind all the national and international decision makers to be aware of their political responsibility to the people of the Republic of Congo, victimized by ideological and selfish motives, to make any necessary move to seek dialogue; the perfect solution to the crisis.

*Issued at Kinshasa, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1997*