



**SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR**

**MESSAGE OF THE 19TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SYMPOSIUM OF  
EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (SECAM)**

The 19th Plenary Assembly of the **SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (SECAM)** took place from July 25 to August 1, 2022 in Accra, Ghana on the theme: **“Ownership of SECAM: Security and Migration in Africa and the Islands.”**

At the end of this plenary assembly, having listened to the various speakers, who came from Africa and various continents, we, your Pastors, address this message to the Church, Family of God which is in Africa and in the islands. We know that “Salvation embraces all realities; be it economic, political, socio-cultural, ecological, or ethical. It therefore covers all contemporary questions...” (Kampala Document n°189). Our address to you will thus concern specifically the ownership of SECAM, security, migration, communication and synodality.

**1. Ownership of SECAM**

SECAM is the organ of pastoral solidarity for the Church in Africa and Madagascar. It is the body that makes the Church in the continent to feel at home and to contribute to the universal Church. Evangelization which is the principal task of the Church requires that each ecclesial entity should, as much as possible, be able to take care of its needs. It is therefore urgent that SECAM which is our continental body for the exercise of evangelization should strive through concrete engagement of all her members to be financially and materially self-sufficient (cf. *Africae Munus*, n°107). We, your pastors, commit ourselves to henceforth support fully the mission of SECAM and urge you to identify with her in order to make her more dynamic and functional in the execution of her mission of evangelization.

We know that “the true missionary is the saint” (*Redemptoris Missio*, n° 90). We, your pastors therefore renew our commitment to carry out this mission which Christ has entrusted to us. We also urge you to join us as we commit ourselves to living a life of holiness as a sign of our Christian testimony.

**2. Insecurity in Africa and Madagascar**

Several regions of our continent are experiencing great insecurity due to socio-political instability, violence, economic poverty, weak health structures, insurgency, terrorism,

exploitation of religion for political purposes and lack of respect for the environment and good governance. These situations are causes of anxiety for our people. This is why we are sending a message to all people of good will to help put an end to them.

The social and political stakeholders and decision-makers have a heavy responsibility in the management of our countries. We urge them to continue to do their utmost to fight against insecurity for our peoples and our countries. We also urge foreign forces to get involved in building peace and security on the African continent.

At the end of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, the bishops urged the sons and daughters of the continent to get up, take up their mats and walk (cf. Jn 5, 8). Today, we also invite all our peoples to be alert to the situations of insecurity and collectively seek solutions to the problem.

The Church must take an important part in this search. This is why the Church must play her prophetic role, by firmly and clearly denouncing situations of insecurity and their causes. She must also continue to offer everyone reasons for hope and peace in collaboration with organizations working for reconciliation, justice and peace (cf. *Africae Munus*).

### **3. The Church and people in migrant situation**

Migration is a normal social phenomenon that is linked to the history of humankind. It has a biblical basis. Thus, according to the book of Deuteronomy, the offering of the first fruits of the harvest to the Lord was accompanied by a solemn profession of faith: "My Father was a wandering Aramaean. He went down to Egypt, where he lived as a sojourner with the small number of people who accompanied him" (Dt 26, 5). One can emigrate for various reasons: natural, economic, political, intellectual. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes migration a right. This is why migration cannot be considered illegal but could be irregular. The suffering of migrants is not linked to the fact of migration as such, but migration can however involve suffering: abuse of the social status of migrants, exploitation, ignorance and "aporophobia" (fear of poverty).

We urge leaders and socio-political decision-makers to put in place the structures and conditions that discourage irregular migration: good governance, employment opportunities, multifaceted security, political and social inclusion, promotion of social justice. We urge transit and host countries to respect the rights and human dignity of migrants.

To all intending migrants, especially young people who seek to exercise their right to migrate, we urge to do so in a manner that is administratively acceptable and with full knowledge of the challenges that await them. We encourage our youths not to lose hope and to hold on to God through a life of holiness.

We urge Christian communities to develop an active pastoral care for migration which can be broken down into four steps of actions: welcome, protect, promote and integrate.

We wish to express our pains in seeing our youth leaving our countries, knowing that they are going to suffer and possibly lose their lives and we lament our inability to stop them from leaving. We commit ourselves to take measures that will encourage their free choice and the ones that will involve them in the construction of their countries.

#### **4. The Church in synodality**

Since October 2021, the Holy Father Pope Francis has called the Church to live a synodal process of reflection on its vocation to promote communion, participation and mission. He invited us as Church to listen more to the Holy Spirit, to ourselves, to the people of God and even to non-Christians. It is our responsibility as a missionary Church to proclaim Christ *ad intra* and *ad extra*. We therefore renew our commitment to promoting inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism.

This process of synodality has already begun at the level of basic Christian communities, parishes, dioceses, nations and regions.

We are now entering the continental phase whose assembly will be celebrated in the month of March 2023. We invite all the faithful to support this dynamism and to make it theirs through prayer and lifestyle.

In line with the encyclicals *Laudato si* and *Fratelli tutti* of Pope Francis, we urge you, in the spirit of synodality, to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth by caring for the environment, fighting against climate change and promoting social justice for the needy and the poor.

#### **5. Social Communications**

We have been re-energized at this assembly by the Church's teachings on Social Communications and the goodwill of our partners.

As Church family of God in Africa and Madagascar, we remain committed to engaging the world of media through the traditional, modern and social means of communication and the new discoveries of the digital era.

We shall intensify the ethical and technical formation of the professionals and practitioners of Church communications while engaging with the philosophies and ideologies that underpin contemporary media institutions, practice and expertise in order to help make them agents of communion, reconciliation and peace.

#### **6. Gratitude**

At the end of this 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of SECAM, we continue to give thanks to God for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of 2019 and for the Kampala Document which also constitutes our roadmap to continue our mission in the African continent. We give thanks to the Lord of life who helped us through the hardships linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, and who gave SECAM the intelligence and the strength to continue working. He made it possible for us to meet again for this 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly. We express our deep gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for his message of encouragement

to us and for having initiated this synodal dynamic which challenges the whole people of God and sets the African and universal Church in motion anew, following him who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn14:6). Many thanks also to Cardinal Luiz Antonio Tagle, Pro Prefect for the Dicastery for the Evangelization of Peoples, to the Prefect of the Dicastery for Social Communications Dr. Paolo Ruffini, represented by Msgr Janvier Yameogo, to the Secretary General of the Secretariat for Synodality represented by Mr. Mauricio Lopez, to the Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana His Exc. Henryk Jagodzinski. We are equally grateful to all our brothers and sisters from other continents and particularly from Europe, Latin America and the United States of America who have expressed their closeness to us and have been signs of the universality of the Church. We reiterate our sincere thanks to the Catholic Church in Ghana which, through its pastors, bishops and priests, men and women religious, lay faithful, has shown us great hospitality. We are sincerely grateful to the entire Ghanaian people, to the President of the Republic, H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo who graced our opening ceremony with his presence and speech and to all the authorities of the country for their welcome and support throughout our stay. We also thank all the members of the SECAM Secretariat, the Secretaries General, the media, the security agents, the staff of the GIMPA Executive Conference Centre, and all the bodies that contributed to the success of this 19th SECAM Assembly.

Finally we express our gratitude to the outgoing executives of SECAM led by His Eminence Philippe Cardinal Ouedraogo and we wish the incoming executives led by Richard Cardinal Baawobr success in the great mission that the Church has entrusted to them.

And may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Africa and Madagascar intercede for us!

Given in Accra, on 31 July, 2022

Bishop Richard Kuuia Baawobr  
Cardinal Elect  
President of SECAM

