

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> AMECEA PLENARY ASSEMBLY**  
**HELD IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA FROM 9<sup>TH</sup> -18<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2022**  
**THEME: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Preamble**

This communique is issued by the 20<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly which brought together Cardinals, Archbishops, bishops, distinguished delegates from all AMECEA member conferences (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan, Zambia, the affiliate members Djibouti and Somalia) and our cooperating partners. The Plenary reflected on a theme which is inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical letter *Laudato Si: Care for Our Common Home*. *Laudato Si*, which literally translates "May He be Praised", is the title of the letter which draws from Saint Francis' canticle of praise to God the creator of all things (Dan. 3: 56-88). However, Pope Francis goes further to critique irresponsible human behavior which is globally contributing to environmental degradation and the 'cry of Mother Earth' and the poor.

***Expression of gratitude***

During the plenary, we have been encouraged by the key note address made by His Eminence Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, the Prefect for the Dicastery for Evangelization of Peoples who underscored that "lack of caring for other people co-exists with behaviours and practices that damage creation" and that "when there is lack of integral human development, fraternity suffers".

We express our gratitude to Tanzania Episcopal Conference for hosting this plenary; and to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania Her

Excellency Madam Samia Suluhu Hassan and her government for the culture of hospitality and for the spirit of Church – State collaboration which we have witnessed and enjoyed.

### **Our Message on the Theme of the Plenary**

We the AMECEA bishops, acknowledge that despite the success stories shared on the implementation of the *Laudato Si* message in the region, member Conferences have also faced challenges which need new pastoral strategies so that promoting ecological justice and mitigating climate change are not mere words but concrete and practical ‘journeying together’ on the path of conversion as proposed in the seven *Laudato Si* goals.

#### **1) Ecological crisis in AMECEA region**

We acknowledge that there is an ecological crisis which to a larger extent is a result of human behavior. In the region, the ecological crisis is now evidenced by negative effects of climate change which include droughts, floods and cyclones, among other disasters. All these are posing a growing threat to the socio-economic development of our countries and to the sustainability of people’s livelihood in Eastern Africa. The scramble for natural resources has often resulted into conflicts and wars, which make the ‘cry of the Earth and of the poor even louder.

#### **2) Expression of concern**

We express deep concern over the rate at which our forests are being depleted due to use of firewood, charcoal burning and our infrastructure construction activities while the people are not making enough efforts to replant trees. We are equally concerned about poorly regulated mining and

extractive industry activities. All these are contributing to pollution and environmental degradation in AMECEA region. We are aware that addressing these issues touches on economic justice and fairness, and as such they cannot be adequately addressed without providing alternatives such as promoting the use of solar and wind energy and other means of livelihood.

### **3) Commendation**

Pope Saint Paul VI remarked in his encyclical letter *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) that: “Modern people listen more to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” We commend the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), governments, dioceses, Catholic associations, individual men, women and all people of good will who are already taking affirmative actions to protect the environment such as promoting tree planting and campaigning for cleaning of our cities from thin plastic and for effective waste management systems. However, we stress the urgent need for more models in AMECEA, whose exemplary lifestyles will highlight the efforts to respond to the cry of Mother Earth.

### **4) Sensitization**

We reiterate Pope Francis’ call for dialogue and aggressive sensitization campaign at the basic community level in order to raise awareness and improve our communication with the people on care for environment, which must include bringing the message to the Small Christian Communities and the family.

### **5) Education**

We emphasize the role of Catholic Social Teaching on environmental care and the importance of integrating eco-education and ecological activities in the education programs for the empowerment of the youth and children in all

schools and houses of formation to priesthood and Consecrated life. The youth must be trained and nurtured to become ambassadors of good ecological practices.

#### **6) Community mobilization**

We also underline the need for the Catholic Church in AMECEA region to mobilize the communities on care for environment and mindset change. And since climate change effects are affecting every member of the society, we commit to partner with governments, other denominations and faith communities, families, the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), community development organizations and all people of good will.

#### **7) Advocacy**

We underscore the need for all Conferences in AMECEA region to strengthen their advocacy role towards environmental care policies and laws that will curb the negative human practices but in a way that is sensitive to the welfare of their people as guided by the principles of social justice.

#### **8) Conclusion**

In conclusion, we, the Catholic Bishops in the AMECEA region firmly make a commitment to respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of poor in fulfilment of our God given mandate. God willed that man should cultivate and care for the earth, (Gen 2:15) and in recognition of this greater calling, I urge all the pastoral agents of the Catholic church and the people of good will to be stewards of the environment and natural resources not only for the benefit of the current generation but to the future generations, on whose behalf we must nurture the environment.

### **A message of Solidarity**

- We want to assure our brothers and sisters in the region and beyond, who are affected by the negative effects of climate change such as floods, that they are not alone. We prayerfully and in a caring spirit stand with you in your struggles.
- Our prayer for peace goes to the member Conferences experiencing conflicts and civil wars: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan but communities affected by conflict in other parts of Africa and the world.
- Finally, we pray for free, fair, credible and peaceful elections in Kenya as the country goes to the poll on August 9' 2022.

**May the Lord bless Tanzania!**

**May God bless AMECEA!**

**May God be blessed now and forever!**

**– AMEN!**