



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

PRESS RELEASE

The Church of Africa Denounces the Exploitation of Mineral and Natural Resources, Fueling Conflict and suffering

Accra (Ghana), March 11, 2024/SECAM - The Symposium of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) convened a pivotal seminar addressing the theme of "*Conflicts in Africa in the Context of the Exploitation of Natural and Mining Resources*" from March 8th to 10th, 2024, in Accra, Ghana. This significant event brought together approximately forty participants, including bishops, priests and lay Catholics, to deliberate upon the critical nexus between natural resource exploitation and conflicts within the African continent.

Over the course of three days, attendees engaged in substantive discussions covering a spectrum of pertinent topics, including the exploitation of mining and other natural resources in Africa, theological reflections, legal frameworks and regulations, the Church's commitment in this domain, advocacy initiatives, as well as strategies for future endeavors aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with these situations, particularly conflicts and their ramifications stemming from the exploitation of natural resources.

The participants unanimously echoed the prophetic message delivered by His Holiness Pope Francis during his apostolic journey to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan from January 31st to February 5th, 2023. In his impassioned plea, Pope Francis implored, "*Hands off Africa! Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered. May Africa be the protagonist of its own destiny! May Africa, the smile and hope of the world, count for more. May it be spoken of more frequently, and have greater weight and prestige among the nations!*"

His Eminence Fridolin Cardinal Ambongo, Archbishop of Kinshasa and President of SECAM, underscored the paradoxical scenario wherein significant foreign investments in oil, gas, mining, and natural resources fail to adequately benefit the local populations of the continent. Cardinal Ambongo emphasized the urgent need for the Church in Africa to adopt a pastoral approach to integral ecology and ecological conversion informed by its social doctrine, particularly in relation to extractive industries.

Participants hailing from diverse regions of Africa and beyond identified key challenges associated with mining and natural resource exploitation on the continent. They also exchanged experiences regarding the Church's existing responses to these challenges within certain Episcopal Conferences and regions worldwide. Various situations across the continent were scrutinized, leading to the formulation of actionable proposals aimed at fostering a better future for believers of all denominations, religious communities and the populace at large.



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

Noteworthy among these proposals is the advocacy for the establishment of a continental Day of prayer and solidarity in Africa to spotlight specific issues in individual countries and amplify the voices of the marginalized. Additionally, there is a call for enhanced education on integral ecology, as well as increased involvement of legal and media professionals in monitoring natural resource exploitation and advocacy efforts.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a key partner and participant in this seminar, has urged the Church in Africa to bolster its commitment to addressing issues that perpetuate immense suffering, such as conflicts and forced displacements of populations.

As emphasized by the President of SECAM, the overarching objective is to ensure that Africa's abundant resources contribute to economic development, benefit the majority of its populace, foster peace, and alleviate poverty. Most Rev. Matthew K. Gyamfi, Bishop of Sunyani (Ghana) and President of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference, echoed this sentiment in his welcoming address, affirming the significance of the seminar's focus in light of prevailing circumstances across the continent and within the Church.

This seminar is organized by SECAM in collaboration with and the support of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Misereor, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mosaiko Institute for Citizenship, Centre d'Etudes pour l'Action Sociale (CEPAS), Denis Hurley Peace Institute (DPHI), Catholic Peacebuilding Network of Notre Dame University.

SECAM extends its heartfelt gratitude to all partners and participants who have demonstrated unwavering commitment to translating the outcomes of this seminar into tangible actions.

Accra (Ghana), March 11, 2024.

**Rev. Fr. Rafael Simbine Junior,
General Secretary of SECAM**

Photos and Captions: (Next page)



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

Photos and Captions:



Photo 1: Participants at the SECAM seminar on the theme “Conflicts in Africa in the context of the exploitation of natural and mining resources”, from March 8 to 10, 2024, in Accra, Ghana



Photo 2: His Eminence Fridolin Cardinal Ambongo, March 6, 2024, in Accra, Ghana



Photo 3: Partial view of the room during the work of the seminar on the theme "Conflicts in Africa in the context of the exploitation of natural and mining resources", from March 8 to 10, 2024, in Accra, Ghana